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ARGOSY

STORIES BY

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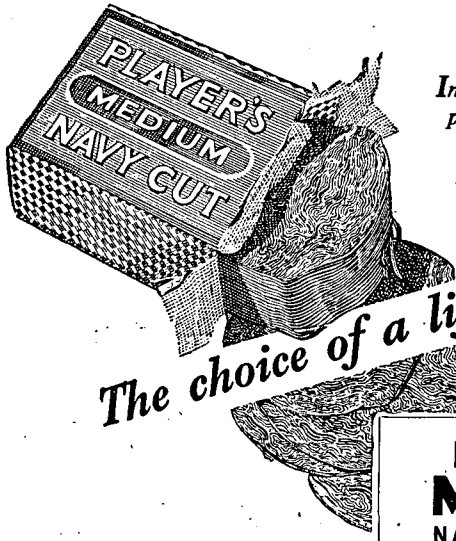

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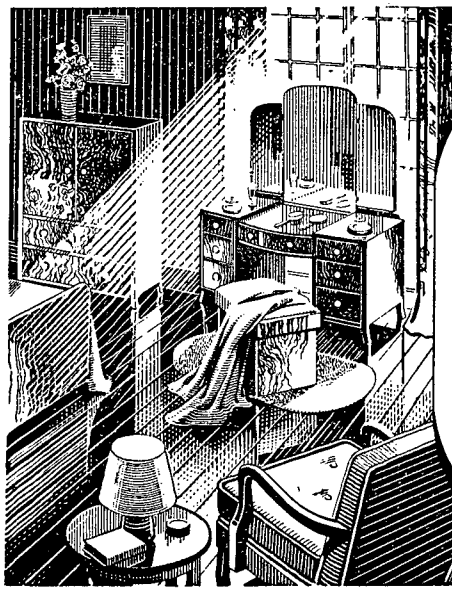

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ARGOSY

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To The Queen

THOU who art mortal queen
And Queen that dies not,
Accept thy subjects' love and veneration
Which, in two kinds, is seen :
As thou art sweet princess
Whom wisdom or beauty denies not,
A personal love, wearing a mortal dress ;
As thou art Queen,
An absolute dedication.

We are England ; thou art she.
Thou art thy peoples oversea,
And all thy nations' history.
Thou art the single strength that stands
Amid the shifting of our sands,
Save One that holds thee in His hands
And guards thy destiny.

May He preserve and we deserve thee
In peace and clear renown ;
In thy waking and thy sleeping
May He hold thee in His keeping,
Crowning thy crown ;
And if in some bleak hour of stress
Thou seem alone in littleness,
Or, when the great Armadas come,
Imperilled in thy island home,
Then may thy immortality
So arm the mortal part in thee
That all thy servants shall be Drake
To earn their glory for thy sake :
May wing and sail and poet's breath
Be God-touched for Elizabeth :
In England's genius be it seen
How God shall save the Queen.

CHARLES MORGAN

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LET ME BE YOUR BOSWELL

He had all of them hanging on his words—except that one woman!

by DAVID WALKER

DOCTOR JOHNSON clung to the lifebuoy. He was alone at night in the Atlantic ocean. The calcium flare burned with an intensity far brighter than daylight. A few minutes ago—or how long could it have been ago?—he had stood on the poop deck watching a millpond sea; but now that he was in its very maw, he knew that the calmness had been a lofty illusion. He and the buoy and the flare climbed watery mountains, fell deep into valleys, so much flotsam. The churning thunder of the screws had dwindled to a mutter.

Although he was very cold and lonely and much afraid, he was not idle. Eyes shaded against dazzle, he peered at the heaving boundary of darkness. He was a fair swimmer, but he knew it would be fruitless to set off in search of an unlocated Mrs. Delaware, a small needle in a vast haystack. If only he could see her, then he would swim to the rescue. Would her hair be honey-coloured, be like ripe corn in this harsh brightness? Had she drowned already?

"Mrs. Delaware!" he called frantically, helplessly at the peaks of the waves. "Camelia! Camelia! Are you there, Mrs. Delaware?" His teeth were chattering. Numbness crept up his legs.

"Here I am," she spluttered surprisingly from behind him.

"Thank God!" He swung the lifebuoy; they hung on at opposite sides. "Thank God," he said again, adding bravely: "*I can call spirits from the vasty deep.*"

"Oh, Doctor Johnson," she shivered. "Oh, Samuel!"

Her hair was not honey-coloured, nor like ripe corn . . .

Doctor Samuel Johnson stood between ladies. Five lined the rail to his right, five to his left. The three whistle-blasts had long since sounded; the gangway had been taken off. The ship moved slowly, breaking her last bright ties with shore. He could hear the rustle of falling, coiling paper. Now the only one remaining was Mrs. Tintenbecher's. Her ribbon was blue; she shared it

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with a fat stranger down on the quay. It broke. Mrs. Tintenbecher sighed beside him.

"Nostalgia," he said it for her. "I never weary of those gay, tenuous threads of parting. They make each sailing a fresh voyage to romance."

The ladies murmured assent. All but one, who said roundly: "I think paper streamers are sentimental nonsense, and so untidy."

The Doctor's trained mind registered this remark. A rebel, he thought, taking note of the speaker.

"Come, ladies," he said a little later, when the tugs had cast off, and the ship was making her own cool breeze in the heat of noon. "Shall I show you the room I have chosen for our morning talks? It is the coffee-lounge, handily situated on the promenade deck. Experience tells me that we shall find it less crowded, more—what shall I say?—more homey than the drawing room. May I lead the way?"

He went downstairs and forward along the promenade deck. He walked with head high and shoulders back, a commanding figure who drew attention from the passengers. The ladies followed quietly. On this first day they were a little shy of one another, but Doctor Johnson would soon break the ice. He exuded a masterful chivalry as he stood aside to let them precede him into the coffee-lounge. One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten, his mind counted automatically. All present except Marghanita; but she was inside at the half circle of chairs in the far corner. They had the room to themselves.

"Pray be seated, ladies," he said, and waited. "Now this first day on board ship is a time for personal things—we unpack, we explore, we hire deck chairs and book our seats at table; in short, we settle in. It is a busy day at the beginning of our journey; and what is the ocean voyage but an interlude, a time apart, a small life within life ripening all too soon the seeds of its finality? So I would not dare to keep you more than a few minutes this morning.

"Let me say only that I extend a most sincere and cordial welcome to each and every one of you. Our organization, Doctor Johnson's Grand Tours Incorporated, has been built up over the years. It has been my life's work. This is our thirty-first Grand Tour, and I say for the thirty-first time that I am here to serve. I hope that you will remember that." He paused, looked at the individual faces. They were all intent but one. It was that same woman who had disliked paper streamers—Mrs. Camelia Delaware; she stared out of a window at the flat river-bank slipping by.

"Now," continued Doctor Johnson, smiling briskly. "I myself have already had the honour of making your several acquaintance. Let me introduce you to one another; then we shall separate for the nonce.

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"Would each lady make a slight inclination as I mention her name? Miss Politzer who comes to us from Columbus, Ohio. Miss Politzer is a student of the peasant cultures of Europe. This is the third year that we have had the pleasure of her company. Mrs. Tintenbecher from Chicago, who also has been with us twice. Mrs. Tintenbecher's collection of representative curios is among the finest in our United States."

There was a stir among the ladies. Mrs. Tintenbecher beamed. What an absurd name, he thought, as he had thought before. How ridiculously Teutonic, and how apt. Tintenbecher. Ink beaker.

"And now Miss Hancock, one of the Hancocks from Savannah, Georgia. She brings us romance from the Deep South. But she brings us more, for Miss Hancock is a most gifted traveller. Whether on a sultry summer's evening in Rome, or in a chill Arctic wind at the North Cape, Miss Hancock contrives always to be chic, soignée, elegant, wisely clad; and yet she travels light. Miss Hancock is a model for us."

The ladies cast covert glances at Miss Hancock.

He went on along the line. The others were with him for the first time; he had a graceful word for each . . . "We welcome Mrs. Delaware of New York City." She nodded coolly to the company; then continued to look out of the window.

"Last but not least, may I introduce my niece, Marghanita? She is my amanuensis and my right hand, ready to help you at all times, and particularly in those feminine matters where mere, clumsy man lacks skill. Marghanita is young; but unlike some girls of her age, she takes a real delight in the company of people whose first youth is receding."

Marghanita uncoiled herself from her chair and shook hands with the ten ladies. She was a very beautiful auburn girl of few words and much repose. His clients always liked her. She sat down again, curling her legs up stealthily like a slumberous pussy-cat. Marghanita never sat out straight.

I hope she keeps out of trouble this time, he thought.

"Hark, the luncheon gong! At this meal we take pot luck; we choose our own places. But I have taken the liberty of booking three small tables for the voyage, and I suggest that we change around and around, getting to know one another. Being seasoned travellers, you will all remember that we do not put on full fig for dinner this first evening—an afternoon dress, perhaps. We shall meet often in the meanwhile, but let us all foregather here at noon tomorrow. I hope then to discuss the Scottish Highlands, where we shall spend our first week together on *terra firma*. If I may venture a prophecy—the air will be cooler tomorrow; warm coats would be a wise choice for the open deck."

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He smiled at them. He knew that they wanted his attention, that they would love to bombard him with little questions. But there was time for that. He had them all hanging on his words already except the Delaware woman. He held open the door. As it happened, she came last.

"I hope your cabin is comfortable, Mrs. Delaware?"

"Not bad, thank you," she said. "At any rate I have one to myself, which is what matters." She was a good-looking woman, younger than most of them. She had blue eyes and honey-coloured hair, or was it like ripe corn? Surely dyed. And aloof, rather patrician features. She was far better dressed than his travelling paragon, Miss Hancock. No doubt she would insist on taking five suitcases on the motor-coach.

"I used to know the Delaware family of Williamsburg . . ." he began.

"No relations of my late husband," she said briefly. "New York people. Tell me, Doctor Johnson; will you be insulted if I don't come to your little talks?"

"Oh no, indeed. Please feel entirely free to follow your inclination. I wonder only if they do not help to paint a first panorama of our journey; and then if they do not help us to know one another, to build that happy family atmosphere." It was the wrong remark for her. He wished he had not made it.

"How sweet!" she said. "Well, perhaps I may come along. Goodbye." And she left him just like that.

Damnation! he thought. Just my luck to get one of that kind.

The success of Doctor Johnson's Grand Tours had always hung upon the impact of Samuel Johnson's own person and personality. He had to be their father-confessor, their guide, philosopher and friendly taskmaster, a romantic figure. Otherwise they squabbled. Now perhaps he was failing; perhaps he was losing his grip.

"How are the bookings on the other side, Uncle Samuel?" asked Marghanita as they went down to luncheon. These ten ladies were only half of his complement. The others—also American—joined him in England.

"A trifle slack still, my dear," he said quietly, but did not tell her the contents of his English agent's cable. Arthur Crouch had wired: "CANCELLATIONS FOUR FIRM BOOKINGS ONLY CERTAIN LOSS IF CANNOT HOOK THREE MORE MINIMUM."

Arthur might cable in a rather flippant manner, but what he said was only too true. Grand Tours could break even on seventeen ladies out of twenty; the margin of profit lay in the three last bus seats, the last block-bookings at hotels, and so on. Furthermore,

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Doctor Johnson had gambled this year against rising prices, and had paid in advance for accommodation.

He was a worried man. Bookings had never been so bad. It might be the war scare or it might be shortage of money; but the nagging, absurd anxiety which assailed him again and again was that his own magic had begun to fail. His business depended on personal recommendation. "A nice man," he could hear his rich ex-clients saying. "And so enthusiastic; but a little old and wordy now, my dear. Perhaps you might be happier not."

As he strode the deck vigorously that afternoon, he dismissed such doubts. But he was an imaginative man; doubt came back in the lonely wakeful watches of the night.

No one would have guessed it the following noon. "Scotland!" he said. "That land of magic! That land of kilts and wild music and purple heather! What an indescribable privilege it is for me to lead a tour once again after these war-ridden hardship-haunted years, to the home of Robert the Bruce and Robert Burns, of John Knox and Sir Walter Scott, of the tyrant Macbeth.

> "*Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until*
> *Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill*
> *Shall come against him.*"

Doctor Johnson paused; then added quietly: "We shall see Birnam."

His ladies shuddered in wrapt attention. "How could I have worried about losing my touch?" he thought. "Just look at them." But his eye passed to Mrs. Delaware who smiled in a chair alone beyond the others.

"We shall see Hadrian's Wall. We shall drive through the Borders, those fair lands of raid and feud. But our Scottish pilgrimage truly begins at Edinburgh . . ." He took them by Edinburgh to the Highlands, to loch and glen and burn. He had never been more eloquent.

"And afterwards, when we are back home in America, shall we too have this image in our hearts?

> "*From the lone sheiling of the misty island*
> *Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas,*
> *Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,*
> *And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.*"

"Didn't the other Doctor Johnson visit the Hebrides?" asked Mrs. Delaware.

"The *famous* Doctor Samuel Johnson," said Doctor Johnson. "Yes indeed, Mrs. Delaware, as most of us remember from our reading."

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She smiled, oh so coolly, oh so mockingly, damn the woman, yet attractive.

"Our Doctor Johnson is a lineal descendant," said Mrs. Tintenbecher loyally.

There was a stir. This always came out early in the trip, and it was always a success. "Samuel Johnson was my ancestor in the collateral line. I am proud to share his name. And now, ladies, I shall be pleased to answer, or try to answer, any questions you may care to put to me."

"Will the heather be in bloom, Doctor?" asked Mrs. Grantham from Minneapolis. "The bonnie purple heather." She was a newcomer with a gift of phrase; an adjunct, he thought.

"I fear not, Mrs. Grantham. Not in June. But the bare dark hills are no less noble."

"The native culture of the Highlands," said Miss Politzer. "Would you say that this was strongly developed, Doctor?"

"A wise question, and a difficult one to answer. Of culture in the meaning of intellectual development, there is perhaps little. But it has seemed always to me that the culture of the Highlands lies in a oneness of those people, those gentle fiery people, with the wind and the mountain and the moor. An identification of man with the elements, with his native land. This is a true culture, I think you will agree."

Everyone asked questions except Mrs. Delaware, whose first name was Camelia. They vied for his attention, and he gave it, as always, with kindly impartiality, making each one feel that he was her own Doctor Samuel Johnson.

A few other passengers listened in the background. He rather liked that. Finally lunch time. "The witching hour," he said, rising. "I have a delightful surprise for you. Mrs. Tintenbecher has asked us for cocktails before dinner, in this room. A charming gesture. I am sure we all accept with pleasure." Murmurs of assent, and the ladies filed out.

"You should have been an evangelist, Doctor Johnson." It was Mrs. Delaware, of course. "Such eloquence and fervour!"

"I took my Ph.D. in cultural geography, madam," he snapped, losing his patience for the first time in years. "I have no evangelistic leanings." But he regained self-control at once. He knew what he must do to curb this rebellious person. He must weave his spell around her. Otherwise, an already shaky tour would be ruined. She got under his skin. "Shall we take a stroll together after the siesta hour, say five o'clock?"

"Do let's," she said. "You can tell me more about Scottish culture."

So they walked the boatdeck. She was nicer alone.

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Afterwards the cocktail party. " I have a toast to offer, a toast and a confident hope. We raise our glasses to our kind hostess, Mrs. Tintenbecher. We hope that this is only the first of many happy gatherings at the cocktail hour ! "

There were several outside guests. The ship's captain was present—a great feather in Mrs. Tintenbecher's cap. He was a jolly, red-faced man, full of fun. And Marghanita sat with the navigator, who was young and handsome. Marghanita listened to him—she was a receptive girl, purring on the sofa, long legs twined. The navigator was far gone already, which was another worry for Doctor Johnson. Marghanita never took a very active part with the ladies ; she simply contributed a soothing and decorative feminine presence ; but when she was in the throes of infatuation, she contributed nothing whatsoever.

Also Mr. Foster, a tall sophisticated Englishman, a novelist, or so the shipboard rumour had it. " Tell me, Doctor," he said in a *sotto voce* aside after several cocktails. " How on earth do you control this bevy of women ? It's remarkable. My guess is that you make all the dear creatures fall mildly in love with you in a sublimated fashion. How else could you keep the peace ? "

" Not at all, sir," said the Doctor, irritated for the second time in a day. He really must watch his temper. " We try to achieve a happy family atmosphere. That is the secret."

" Happy families do stem from love," remarked Mr. Foster.

Next day it was the great capitals. Of London the Doctor said :

> " *Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day ?*
> *Thou art more lovely and more temperate . . .*
> *So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,*
> *So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

" But nothing I say of London can be adequate. For us, with our Anglo-Saxon heritage, London is the greatest, the most enchanted city. History marches with us at each step along those immemorial pavements, or as we glide on the timeless bosom of Mother Thames . . .

" We take leave of London, which at heart is a masculine city, a man's city, and we come to Paris, that most feminine of capitals, made for woman, with all the grace and lightness of a woman . . .

" And Berlin ; just a memory now—a place we shall not visit . . ."

" What traits would you ascribe to Berlin ? " asked Mrs. Delaware, at it again from the expression on her face.

" Sausage," said the Doctor gaily, getting the better of this one, and taking a risk with Mrs. Tintenbecher. " *Leberwurst.*

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What else ?

" As for Madrid," he went on, when the laughter had subsided. " Old Madrid ! *En mi vida he visto semejante pulchridad ! Ay de mi, Alhambra !* " None of them spoke Spanish. " And last is Rome, the jewel, the Eternal City . . ."

So the voyage wore on. " I do think the Atlantic ocean is hideously boring," Camelia Delaware remarked on the fourth day, when the whistle hooted mournfully overhead, and wisps of fog scudded low beyond the coffee-lounge window.

" For me it is a great refreshment," said the Doctor. " A revitalization for busy weeks ahead." There was a chorus of agreement at this graceful snub. None of the ladies liked Mrs. Delaware.

It had been Doctor Johnson's lifelong rule to show absolute impartiality, a rule he broke only on the rare occasions when a lady seemed likely to be difficult. Then he would single her out for attention, and a couple of days would invariably be enough to make her his slave.

Mrs. Delaware was the toughest case he had ever handled. She seemed to regard him as an agreeable joke. She was a supercilious enigma, and the more valuable time he gave to her at the expense of the others, the less amenable did she become in public. He already had anxieties enough about the bad bookings in England ; then Mrs. Delaware. But the most disturbing thing was his longing for her company. That had never happened before. Truly, he must be losing his grip. Outwardly, however, he maintained a bold and confident front.

" It's wonderful how enthusiastic you remain, Doctor, when you have visited these hallowed shrines so many times before." This was Mrs. Altringham from Butte, Montana.

" Ah no, dear lady ! I see them anew through each fresh pair of eyes. That is my pleasure and my reward."

" Why, I think it's quite wonderful."

" A little word of reminder about travellers' cheques. If we keep the cheques themselves in our purse; then we must remember to put the *list* of cheques in another place."

" What would you advise as the safest place, Doctor Johnson ? "

" Surely a matter for individual discretion, Mrs. Delaware."

The fifth day was sunny, clear and calm. It was a rare day for the North Atlantic, that inhospitable ocean. England lay thirty-six hours away, and already the passengers were restless, seeing the end of this time apart, this life within life as Doctor Johnson had called it. They were excited. But the Doctor's *Weltschmerz* grew apace. He thought morosely of the dictum of his illustrious

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ancestor in the collateral line: *Being in a ship is being in a jail with the chance of being drowned.*

"Not that there's any chance of drowning in weather like this," he added to himself. He little knew how wrong he was.

Doctor Johnson had rules and precepts for the conduct of life, and he occasionally broke them. But there was one rule he had never broken. He never allowed himself to be alone after dark with any single one of his lady travellers—a most sensible precaution against scandal.

But desperate cases need desperate remedies. He broke his rule that night with the elusively mocking Mrs. Camelia Delaware.

"Shall we go astern and watch the moonlight on the wake?" It was late. She was alone with a novel in the drawing room. "I have just been there. It is quite beautiful."

"I'd like to," she said, smiling up at him. "I'll fetch a coat." The coat she fetched was a mutation mink.

"There goes your uncle," the navigator murmured to Marghanita in their sheltered nook on the after bridge. "Who's his girl friend?"

"Mrs. Delaware. Poor Uncle Sam's completely fallen for her. It's rather sick-making, isn't it, but I suppose they're still human, after all. No, Tom!"

A little later, the navigator glanced down again at the two figures leaning on the poop rail, silhouetted against moon-washed water. It was indeed beautiful, but there was an opulent vibrant beauty within the compass of his own right arm. He was just turning back to Marghanita when something held his sailor's attention.

"Help me up," he heard the woman's voice. She had turned round. "I love sitting on the rail. I always have, ever since I was little." He saw the man put his hand to her waist and lift her.

Damned idiots, thought the navigator; but he said nothing.

"Now you can let me go," said Mrs. Delaware skittishly. Her right hand was on a stanchion.

"Do be careful, Camelia." The Doctor's voice was hushed but resonant. He took his hands slowly from her waist.

"Watch out!" bellowed the navigator. He had just remembered a chance remark of the Chief's that morning. "*This blasted old ship's all rusted to hell. Half the stanchion bolts . . .*"

But he was too late, or perhaps his shout did it. A treacherous handhold is worse than none. There was a distinct snap of metal above the noise of the ship; Mrs. Delaware toppled slowly and irrevocably backwards. The man lunged for her legs, caught one, lost it. He stood for perhaps a second with his hands half-up like a tired soldier surrendering to the enemy; then he looked wildly around, saw the lifebuoy, grappled with it, pushed it over, shouted:

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"Man overboard!" in a great voice, climbed the rail and jumped without the smallest hesitation.

Marghanita screamed. The navigator bellowed: "Man overboard!", went down the companionway at one leap, and sprinted forward.

Her hair was not honey-coloured, nor like ripe corn; it was the shade of wet tow; her make-up was gone; gone also was the mysterious air of mockery.

"I think you're the most wonderful man in the world, Samuel." She said this with difficulty, for her teeth were chattering. "Drown together!"

"Won't drown! Wind rope round your arm! Pick us up soon." But clinging to the lifebuoy alone with her in the eternal waste of ocean, he did not have hope. *Serves me right*, he thought, cured suddenly, absolutely and inexplicably. Then, being cured, he at once thought of things differently: I shall drown now, but I shall have done my duty. I shall have fulfilled my trust.

"Ship's coming!" He looked over his shoulder. His back was sore from that devastating fall into the water, not like water at all, but solid at twenty-two knots. A lifetime ago. Yes, the ship was coming round, a city of lights.

"Why have you never married, Samuel?"

"Because I am wedded to my profession, Mrs. Delaware." He was very tired and numb to the waist now. He spoke with great difficulty. "It is my mission and my life."

"Your wife, you mean!" It was still the same Mrs. Delaware, although her eyes confessed to him. He suddenly liked her very much in the proper way. She would be an adjunct to the tour, if ever they were rescued. "Ah well," she sighed. They always did say women could stand cold water longer—something to do with a better distribution of adipose deposit. "Ah well," she gasped again. "Perhaps you could let me be your Boswell."

He did not like to tell her that this remark was not original, but was made to him on an average of ten times on each Grand Tour. It was healthy, though; it was the right thing.

"Yes, indeed," he said, smiling as well as he was able.

After that, silence.

"Ahoy, there!" Oh, unbelievable joy and relief!

"Ahoy!" he quavered. Soon strong arms grasped Mrs. Delaware; strong arms lifted him into the lifeboat.

"Congratulations, sir," said the navigator. "A fine effort. Drink this!"

He drank whatever it was that fought the chill in his bones, and he went down deep, only dimly aware of thunderous

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cheering as they drew near to the ship.

"How do you feel now, Doctor?" asked the captain next afternoon. He stood with his cap under his arm navy-fashion in the sick bay.

"A little stiff, Captain. Otherwise wonderfully restored."

"That was a most gallant rescue. I congratulate you." If the captain had heard of the foolishness which led to the gallant rescue, he gave no sign of it. "We are all proud to have you with us. The passengers ask me to say that a collection has been made in your honour. It has yielded two hundred and twenty-eight dollars, as well as seventy-four pounds twelve and sixpence in sterling. They have entrusted me with the selection of a suitable gift. Would something in silver be appropriate? Or gold?"

"Why, yes, Captain. Why, yes—silver." Doctor Johnson was overcome. He had never expected such a thing. But even as he spoke, a small voice told him: *Cash is what you need.* Still, he could not say that. "Please convey my deepest thanks."

"I must go," said the captain. He shook hands, went to the door and turned. "I hope to dock at eight a.m. You'd better be ready to cope with the Press." Which was the Doctor's first inkling of what lay in store for him.

After that, he held court for his nine other ladies. They went on to the next ward to see Mrs. Delaware, who also was none the worse for her immersion, in fact a great deal the better, they agreed. "How much *nicer* she seems," they said to one another.

Then it was Marghanita. She kissed him. "It was awful seeing you jump, Uncle Sam."

"I learned my lesson," said the Doctor humbly. "Never again!"

She laughed lazily. They had a good understanding.

"Where's your navigator, my dear?"

"Busy steering us past Ireland. He's rather sweet and a man of action, I must say," she added. "But a little too dully nautical."

Last thing before sleep was a radiogram from the Doctor's English agent. "DEAR SAM," it said at extravagant length. "WHAT'S THIS I READ IN EVERY HEADLINE YOU OLD GALAHAD YOU WALRUS YOU STOP FAR OVERBOOKED EVEN BRITISH FEMALES SIGNING UP IN SHOALS STOP ARRANGING DUPLICATE BUSES EXTRA ACCOMMODATION ITS A WOW ARTHUR."

Doctor Johnson disapproved of such telegraphic verbosity, and he did not altogether approve of Arthur Crouch's ribald tone. Who would imagine that he was a Devonshire Crouch, one of the most ancient families of England? But this was staggering news. No wonder Arthur had let himself go. The Doctor slept well.

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"They're waiting for you," said the jolly captain himself. "All the ladies are ready at the gangway, including Mrs. Delaware none the worse. There are about fifty reporters and photographers. I said they would have to stay on the dock."

"Come, then," said Doctor Samuel Johnson. His back was slightly sore, not bad. He picked up his cane, his brief case and his panama hat.

"Just a moment," said the captain. "Take a look at that."

The Doctor took a look. Three glittering twenty-seater motor coaches, not one, stood on the dock. To their sides was affixed the golden banner: *Doctor Johnson's Grand Tours Inc.* Beside them stood a cluster of strange ladies, very animated. Farther along, at the foot of the gangway, were many representatives of the Press with pads and cameras.

"All yours," the captain said. He put on his gold-braided cap, and they went together to the elevator; thence along A deck. Doctor Johnson bowed to the smiling passengers.

"Good morning," he bowed again at the gangway. "Mrs. Tintenbecher, Miss Hancock, Mrs. Grantham, Miss Politzer, Mrs. Dupuis, Mrs. Delaware, Miss Smithson, Miss Pulaski, Miss Craig, Mrs. Altringham." They were his flock. "Good morning, Marghanita. Now do we all have our passports?"

"Yes, Doctor Johnson," they chorused.

"Let us go ashore then. After you, ladies."

"Oh no! You go first, Doctor. The reporters are waiting."

"Will you lead, Captain?"

"Right," said the captain. He was always having his picture taken with celebrities, and enjoyed it as much as the next man.

Doctor Samuel Johnson followed him. He was halfway down the gangway when a thought struck him. He turned.

"The bard of Avon," he said to his ladies, coming two by two. "The bard of Avon tells us:

> *"This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle . . .*
> *This other Eden, demi-Paradise . . .*
> *This precious stone set in the silver sea . . .*
> *This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England . . ."*

He went on to meet the clicking shutters. It was his finest hour, and honourable fame his portion.

* * *

Depend on the rabbit's foot if you will, but remember it didn't work for the rabbit! R. E. SHAY

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NORTHWARD FLIGHT

This was the courting time, when she would find her mate, perhaps for life

by S. CARRIGHAR

THE bird's northward flight was like a reversal of time, for she left the spring and was entering winter again. The green landscape disappeared where the trees did, soon after she reached the coast of the Bering Sea. Then the landward scene was an endless brown marsh with a wide river dividing it.

The ice in the river had broken up and was tossing its way to the sea. The Eskimos thought that the moving ice sounded like a hoarse whisper, *kusko*, *kusko*, and therefore had named their *kwim*, their river, the Kuskokwim. The crunching noise reached the bird in the sky. But the speed at which she was flying soon took her beyond it, and then she heard only the quick *whuff*, *whuff*, *whuff* of her wings, which had been beating for most of each day since she left Victoria.

After she passed the Kuskokwim, the land was covered increasingly with white snow. At the Yukon Delta the beach showed a crust of ice. Northward that ice became wider, stretching above the shallow sea till it met the off-shore field of loose, broken floes. The bird turned out over it, for she must keep open leads in sight, since she was a loon and could alight and take off only in water.

The farther north she had travelled, the stronger the urge had become to push on. All this day she had been flying, and midnight approached. The horizontally coasting sun had slid close to the rim of the sea. Now in May it would dip out of sight briefly, but not long enough for full darkness to thicken. The light never lessened much, only became more delicate, with a shadowy shine in the air, so real that this bird flying through it must surely acquire a new gloss on her purple-black throat.

She tilted the rudder formed by the trailing webs of her feet and began to descend. Choosing a straight lead of water ahead, she dropped the clean arc of her body and soon was cleaving the surface, her breast a keel and her wings held aloft like black sails.

Other migrating birds had come down here to rest and to forage. Several satin-black cormorants floated and splashed on the water, a single eider duck stood on the edge of the ice, his webs

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curling over, and a whole flock of emperor geese sat in a close company on a nearby floe, their slate-grey bodies as quiet as granite boulders, and all their white heads facing into the south-west breeze. The loon found a mated pair of her own kind, asleep with their long necks coiled over their backs, and heads under their wings.

She stayed near them, although they were not of the flock familiar to her, the several dozen Pacific loons that were her neighbours at the Alaska breeding grounds in the summer and also down at Vancouver Island during the winter. The others had made their migration without this female, but she would find them again at the nesting marsh. She had had to come north alone, for she had lingered too long, one day, on a park pond in Victoria.

During the late winter she had taken to spending her days on the pond. There, under the trimmed willows and along the brushed paths, walked human beings, and those who liked birds fed the waterfowl on the little lake. The loon was wary of most of them, but in one she felt confidence.

The first time she saw him, a blue overcoat was buttoned snugly around his slight ageing figure, and he was wearing a grey felt hat and suède gloves—a human being as trim as a bird. It was the courteous way that he walked, however, that made the loon feel at ease with him. For there was no aggressiveness in his gait; no secret wish to strike betrayed itself in his motions. On that sunny morning the wind was brisk. Tired after a flight against it, the loon had come down on the pond, and among other, more restless humans, discovered this man, who had met her eye and who then sat down on a bench near the water's edge and continued to watch her.

She paddled nearer to see the silver knob on his walking stick, and his hands as he folded his gloves down off his fingers, and turned the gloves right side out, and laid them beside him. He took a pipe and tobacco pouch from his pocket and unhurriedly lighted a smoke for himself, meanwhile observing the bird over his hand with the match. She was propelling herself back and forth, each time nearer the line of cemented rocks at the shore of the pond.

When the man had drawn a few puffs on his pipe, he took a tin box from his pocket, opened the lid, and threw a dried shrimp to the loon. Other birds, ducks and gulls, came clamouring forward, and the loon swam farther away.

The man waited until the others became discouraged and left. Then he tossed a second shrimp to the loon, dropping it at the edge of the water. Inconspicuously, without any apparent movement, she let herself sink and rose with the shrimp in her gullet.

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When the man threw her another, she waited before going down for it. It became a small plot between the loon and the man that he would feed only her, and that both of them should so arrange matters that the rest of the birds did not notice.

The loon preferred fish to shrimps, but she found a curious pleasure in being fed by that quiet human acquaintance. She formed the habit of coming each day to the park, and he was always there. Then one morning she did not find him. The next day she returned and for several hours paddled around on the pond. In the afternoon, when she went back to her flock in the harbour bay, they were gone—they had set out on their spring migration without her.

For several more days the loon went to the park, and when her friend did not appear, she gathered her strength, having no other luggage, and winging up from the placid pond, started north on a twenty-five-hundred-mile flight alone.

Although she was young, two years old, and had made the trip north only once before, she had not lost the way. Now her journey was nearly over. Just beyond the lead where she rested, the shore line turned east into Norton Sound. That was her route; before noon she would arrive at the head of the sound, where the Unalakleet River entered it. On the surrounding marsh, spattered with ponds, soon her flock would be choosing their nesting sites.

And she, too, would be rearing a brood—wouldn't she? This was the spring, the start of her third year, when she should find the male who would be her companion, perhaps for life. For most loons, the migration was also the courting time; before they had reached the northern breeding grounds, they were mated. This young female would still be single when she appeared there—but that would be true of some of the males, too, surely. It was not an invariable rule that loons were paired before they had come to the end of their northward flight.

The loon was ready to start the last lap of her journey. Driving ahead with rapid wing-beats, she turned into the sound. Soon she had passed the rocks at Black Point, passed Tolstoy Point, where clouds of gulls were clamouring as they divided the pebbly nooks for the nests; and there at last was the swing of the shore where her river emerged between two long sand spits.

The river was frozen still, and the shelf ice spread out to sea as far as the off-shore bar. Many ponds lay on the ice. Gulls, ducks and geese floated upon the ponds, watching for fish, or stood at the edge digesting a meal. The fish would swim up through the cracks and out into the shallow water, where they were trapped in plain view of the birds. Arctic terns, preferring a more exciting

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hunt, were flying along the cracks, suddenly making their sinuous downward turns as they dived. In the steamy debris on the beach, Northern Phalaropes, snipes and sand-pipers ran about, catching insects as fast as they hatched.

Sand-hill cranes, snow geese and black brant were migrating over; the flocks made a web of shadow drawing across the softly glittering white expanse of the ice. Birds everywhere—and many of them known to the loon, neighbours from the last year when, as a juvenile, she had come north, not to rear a brood, only to grow and mature. Late in the summer the birds had scattered to many parts of the hemisphere—the terns to the Antarctic, eleven thousand miles away—and now they were back at this small patch of coast, to which they had come by varying routes, but unerringly. And the loons?

Six were splashing out in the open water beyond the shelf ice. As the female flew over, she could see schools of fish milling along the ice. It was a feast such as few birds could hope to find, but the loons were not taking them. They were playing, in pairs, chasing, dipping their bills, flinging spray from their heads—three males and three females. In the entire flock, however, were several times six.

The loon turned up river, first passing the marsh. The ponds were melting round the edges, and there loons were swimming, in couples. The female continued round the cliff where the river came out of the mountains. A lake lay behind the cliff, a good nesting ground; two loons had taken possession. She followed the river farther. Many sloughs were enclosed in its elaborate windings, and on some of them she saw loons in the inevitable pairs. But the female was hungry.

She turned back to the open water beyond the ice. A great light patch on the floor of the sound told her that she was not the only one hunting here. For, supported upon the black mud of the bottom, lay a beluga whale. Its tail was bent at right angles, so that merely by a quick straightening of its spine it had the leverage to shoot forward. Now it was motionless, waiting and perhaps enjoying the feel of the water's flow on its slick, white, hairless skin. The loon knew belugas; she knew that fish, not birds, were their choice of prey, and yet she was startled by the great pale body, the immobile face with its thick, white, expressionless lips, and its cold, milky-blue eyes.

The loon swung aside and, in doing so, involuntarily solved her hunger problem. For the rows of white spots on her back caught the overhead light in a way that imitated the bright streaks from a school of small fish. A fat grayling, also foraging, shot up out of the gloom towards the bird. The loon speared it, rose to the

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surface and swallowed it. The grayling was almost too large for her throat, but the bird worked it down, throwing her head from side to side, and arching her neck to pinch the fish through her gullet.

It soon became evident that the tardy female was the only unmated loon in the Unalakleet population. She spent most of her time off the edge of the ice, apart from the others. Whereas they liked a stretch in the lee of a pressure ridge, the female took for her own the unsheltered water farther along.

She had, of course, not started a search for a nesting site. She spent most of her time in preening her feathers—her white breast and black wings and her finely striped throat—until now she was as sleek and handsome a bird as could have been seen anywhere on the shores of the sound.

Before long she had one satisfaction the other loons did not share. A young Eskimo boy began coming out to the brink of the ice and befriending her. He had no particular wish to kill the bird, since the taste of loon flesh did not appeal to him. And not knowing that her natural fear of humans had broken down, he felt flattered because she had let him approach within reach the first time that he saw her. The next day he had brought her one of the tomcods he had caught through the ice for his father's dogs. Many times more he returned. She enjoyed the chance to receive food again from a human hand, and perhaps his companionship made her a little less lonely.

The rest of the loons were ignoring her. They had chosen their home sites, but building the nests was not yet their main concern. The older birds would be using the nests of former years, and the younger ones would not start building until the ponds were completely thawed. Meanwhile they were absorbed in the yearly ritual of love.

They were high-strung birds, and one could believe that love was, for them, a very disturbing experience. During the night, in the lucent twilight, their cries spread without pause over the ice and the tundra. They were cries close to human tones, and sounding as if they expressed wild dismay. The musical cadence began with an introductory syllable, lifted to a long note, held as if waiting for an answer that never came, and then dropped to a brief, inconclusive finish.

In the Eskimo village the people were kept awake—not so much by the volume of sound as by the emotion with which the cries saturated the air. The night seemed to pulse with grief, hopeless and inconsolable. Made restless, young Eskimo couples would wander out on the airstrip beyond the town, and even old women roused themselves from their reindeer-skin mattresses and

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went down on the sand to continue their work of gathering driftwood.

Or was the fulfilment the heartbreak? With some of the pairs of loons, now, the ritual was approaching its climax. One afternoon two of the mated loons paddled apart from the flock. For a while, with a trance-like stillness, they remained near each other. Then in perfect unison they began to swing back and forth, propelled by their webs to the left, a quick turn to the right, and back to the left. The female was low in the water, even the base of her throat was submerged, but the male was riding the ripples splendidly, with his graceful dark wings held high over his back. At the end of the dance the birds drew together, touched bills, let themselves drift apart, came near and touched bills again, with an excited motion. The female of the pair suddenly dived then, in a flash of spray.

From the west a migrating loon was approaching. The spray caught his eye—or was it the single female that did? He came down in the water, a glide that furrowed the sea. When he stopped, he tilted his bill towards the sky and turned his head, side to side, to survey his surroundings.

He must have liked what he saw, for after he caught and ate two or three fish, he idled along the edge of the ice, seeming to be in no hurry to go on farther north.

His glance often fell on the unmated female. She watched him casually for a while, after which she swam back and forth with an arch in her throat and her eyes under the water, seeking a fish. She captured one, tossed it into the air, and caught it prettily. Then she coiled her neck over her back and had a short nap. When she awoke, the new male was still there. The two of them paddled about in the water, appraising each other.

Soon he was more daring. He began swimming past her, very near, with rapid, bold strokes. The female became agitated. She dashed away, kicking the water back with her webs, and was on the wing for a little flight back over the ice. Her young human acquaintance was there below, walking out towards the edge. Not fearing him, she did not change her course. He was carrying what seemed a bundle of strings in his hand. Actually it was a bola, a missile composed of six sinew thongs, knotted together at one end, with ivory balls attached to the other ends. The boy's father had used it in years past to snare birds, and the boy had been practising with it.

When the loon flew above him, he whirled the balls and let fly. They soared into the air and one of the thongs, touching the bird, swiftly encircled her wings. She fell to the ice, not injured, but frantic to free herself. He picked her up and enclosed her body

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in one of his arms, with his hand firmly closed on her throat, to prevent her attacking him with her bill. When she still struggled, he gripped her head in his fingers. She fought him, but he tightened his hold; she could not get away. Her heart was pounding. She could not see where she was going, but she could feel the swing of the boy's hip as he ran back to shore.

The boy took the loon into a cabin, where he wrapped a cloth tightly round her to keep her quiet, and laid her upon a table. Five or six Eskimo children and a woman stood grouped about it. They talked, in strong but relaxed voices. The small ones wanted to touch the bird, but her captor, whom the others called Isaac, kept pushing their hands away.

Isaac began to fashion a jess out of sealskin. After it was attached to the loon's leg, he tied the other end to a rope. Then all of the humans left the cabin, and the loon on the table could hear a hammering.

Isaac returned for her. After he fastened the rope to a stake, he removed the cloth. His family stood in a circle round the bird, waiting to see what she would do. Her legs were so placed, to be most efficient in swimming, that she scarcely could walk, but she flopped and hobbled out to the end of her tether, which gripped and held her like some unknown enemy. Panic-stricken, she threw herself over the sand, while the children laughed, all except one girl about sixteen years old. When the loon tripped, the girl untangled the rope.

"Naomi! Do not let her go!" Isaac cried, darting forward. But Naomi was not releasing the bird, only trying to make her comfortable.

Many more children had gathered. Wherever she turned, all the loon could see was their brown-stockinged legs and bright calico parkas.

When it became quite certain that she could not escape, the loon settled upon the sand and pulled herself into her feathers. She was dazed with fear and exhaustion. Isaac brought her a dried tomcod and a pan of water, but the loon had no appetite for them. Except when she tried occasionally to flap away, she lay inert, all but unconscious.

She was not alone until evening. When she looked around then, she found that she was tied on the beach, near the last village cabin. Between her and the cabin were several dogs, each chained to a separate stake. Excited by the bird's presence, they had howled most of the day, increasing her terror. Now they had just been fed and were quiet. A lane of water lay at the foot of the beach, inside the ice. The loon tried to reach it, but the rope was not long enough.

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Her efforts attracted the children, who came running to watch her. Later several adults stopped. The people would stay up all night, it seemed. The sun had gone down and appeared again, and still the children were playing. But finally most of the parents and children were ready for sleep. Before Isaac left his new pet, he moved the fish and the pan of water in front of her.

The loons' melancholy voices rose through the wide, soft, clear silence. Overhead was a dark loneliness, darkness diluted with tenuous sunlight, a distant ethereal dome punctured with stars.

Far up the beach appeared two human figures—Naomi the Eskimo girl, and a white man taller than she. They came on at a slow pace, holding hands and sometimes in their conversation stopping to face each other. Naomi was going to show him the loon.

When they drew near, she stepped ahead and took up the bird, tightly holding her throat, as Isaac had done. The man spread the toes of the loon's web with his fingers. The loon tried to draw back her bill to jab at his hand, and he quickly let the foot go. Naomi put the bird back on the sand.

She and the man sat down on a driftwood log. Naomi was facing the ocean, her hands demure in her lap. Her companion straddled the log, with one foot on the top and an elbow across his knee. He took the braid that hung over the girl's shoulder and tickled her cheek with the end. Naomi's smile had a shy delight in it; her lips did not part, but her eyes were unable to hide their pleasure. The man's blue eyes sent her their flash at an oblique angle.

"Ahya-keenya—with a name like that, why do you let people call you Naomi?"

"You don't like Naomi?"

"Not as well as your Eskimo name. I'll never meet any other girl with a name as pretty as Ahya-keenya."

"Missionaries called me Naomi."

"Ahya-keenya's the name I'll always remember you by."

Naomi's face did not change by so much as a flicker; she was as still as a wild creature, freezing at danger's approach.

"You go away?" she asked, after a moment.

"As a matter of fact, I do have to leave before long," he replied. "That was something I planned to tell you."

"Where you go?"

"I'm being transferred to Kodiak. It's a bigger station—an advance for me."

"Advance?"

"A better job, I mean. I'll be making more money."

Naomi was looking out over the ice now, absently drawing her

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fingers along the braid. Her voice was reticent, with the least possible chance of inspiring ridicule, as she said, "We have big house. You could live with us."

"No—no, I have to go. I'm under contract to the Government. I signed a paper promising that I'd work up here for two years, and I have to go wherever they send me."

She risked a smile again: "After that, you come back?"

"I certainly will! We'll get a boat and a tent, and you and I will go fishing for a long time. That's what I've always wanted to do."

"Maybe we go now? My family have fish camp up river. Plenty wood for fires. We could trap salmon-trout all winter."

"No—that wouldn't be right. I'm surprised at you. I told you I signed a paper. Would you want me to break a promise?"

"I want you to be here. How much longer you stay?"

"I don't know—whenever they send the 'plane. Maybe tomorrow, maybe next week." He swung both feet to her side of the log, and taking her hand in his, touched the knuckles, one by one, with his lips.

"I'm going to miss you, Ahya-keenya." He drew her close and they were quiet except for his roving hand, to which the girl stiffened.

"You send for me?"

"You wouldn't be happy in Kodiak. Lots of big brown bears down there. Bigger than polar bears. You're afraid of bears, you know."

With her feet nimble in their skin mukluks, Naomi jumped up and ran towards the cabin. He ran after her, but she dodged and eluded him. Without a word, she entered the door and quickly closed it. He stood outside, tapping softly a few times. Finally he tried the latch, but the door had been locked.

When he came to the beach again, the loon had an instant of fright. But the man had forgotten her; his foot kicked sand over her as he passed. He picked up a rock and hurled it at one of the gulls, and then walked away up the shore towards the distant white buildings beside the airstrip.

The single migrating loon had not gone on farther north. Soon after Naomi's companion had disappeared, the bird came in over the ice, crossed the beach, and continued on towards the mountains. He gave no sign that he was aware of the captive female, but soon he returned. He flew the course several times and perhaps he did know she was there, for the last time he passed the shore, his harsh cry rang out. As she watched the strong beat of his wings and then saw the spray as he landed, she was roused momentarily.

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After that he appeared every day. Once in the early morning when no human beings were out, he swung about and apparently paced off the strip of water between the ice and the shore. It was not long enough for a loon's landing and take-off, and he returned to the open sea. He and the captive had no real relationship; yet the frequent sight of him was a sort of tie with her own kind—enough to keep her alive. One day she accepted a fish from Isaac, and occasionally, after that, others, but she was growing rapidly thinner and her plumage, once so silken, had become dishevelled and dusty.

Everywhere else on this coast, the urgent delights of spring were approaching their peak. Barn swallows were cutting their arcs past the cabin roof, flying in threes, one leading, two in pursuit. Even a quick eye could hardly follow their turns, the breathless straightaway and the whiplash reversal, the darting, skimming, and flinging about of the scimitar bodies that never tired. Over the edge of the beach the Arctic terns, soon to break up into pairs, engaged in an aerial race that brought their gregarious interlude to a brilliant finale. The entire flock would mount into the sky in a wheeling cloud and circle deliriously.

Insistent, and closer still to the consummation, was the courtship song of the Baird's sand-pipers. Many times a day one of the males would rise from the tundra. His white breast, as white as if it had pressed into snow, would flash as he zigzagged upward till he reached a certain point over a female below on the ground, where he would hover, with vibrating wings a blur and his head tilting down. His vocal twirring was so long-sustained then, so commanding, and so intense that finally something had to happen, the strain had to break. The little female would fly from her hiding place in the moss, and the triumphant male would come back to earth.

Pairs of longspurs were already building their nests, and the males often stopped to celebrate with aerial songs like an overflow of contentment. The savannah sparrows had laid their eggs. One with a nest near the tethered loon sang continuously from the top of a frost mound, a plat of grass. At one edge of the mound, under a tussock, his mate was sitting upon the nest, and the male bird was keeping intruders away with the defiant earnestness of his "tsip, tsip, tseee, tseer."

There were battles, too, the jaegers harassing the gulls, and the gulls competing with noisy cries, "Mine, mine, mine," but the sounds of the great festival drowned out the angry notes. From the small redpolls, the snipes and plovers to the warbling cranes, snow geese and whistling swans, passing across the sky, came an outpouring of inescapable poignant voices, making the very air quiver round the loon lying so nearly dead.

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One other comfort beside the attentive male was helping to keep the breath of life fluttering in her. Naomi spent many hours on the beach, and she would talk to the bird, telling her that the herring would soon arrive. They would be caught in the nets; Naomi would bring one, large and fresh, for the loon.

Naomi was sewing new mukluks for a young sister, but the work did not progress very fast, she so often sat with her hands in her lap and eyes turned across the ice. By now it was spongy and soft —too dangerous for the dog teams to go out on it. It was breaking up into blocks with wide crevasses between, and each day was wetter and looser, each day different. But Naomi was not observing the changes. Her eyes were vacant.

Naomi was most often there in the night, when the sun shone only as a burning gold line tracing the top of the headland farther along the shore. She would stay till the first wood chopping was heard, before breakfast. There she had solitude; there she could weep and no one observe. It was no help to her that the off-shore loons always sang, one would say, of joys never to be fulfilled. As their dark wailing lifted and dropped away, it seemed to speak for Naomi and, as well, for the captive bird.

She had been listening to the sound one night, when her glance fell upon the motionless loon. She rose to her feet and picked up the loon impulsively.

"Maybe somebody out there wait for you, maybe somebody want you! You are missing somebody?"

She loosened the jess from the loon's foot, and with the bird in her arms started down to the ice. She detoured round the water along the sand and set out on the slushy surface. The most precarious ice was that where the ponds of tide water had lain. Twice she broke through and must throw herself forward upon a browner, grainier, firmer block. She could jump across some of the cracks, but had to go to the end of others; all were now mushy-bordered. The ice was melting in places, and there it was porous; Naomi circled aside.

Finally she reached the ridge of tumbled slabs out at the edge. She walked to its end, where the ice simply disintegrated into the sea. She laid the loon on the watery surface. The loon skittered along to the sea's open depths, where she dived at once, taking her torn, dirty plumage, and her hunger, down into the haunts of fish.

She caught a trout immediately, and tomcods; in her present state she was not waiting for delicacies. With her hunger appeased, then, she floated and preened. She dived and splashed, dipped her head, and ran her bill down her feathers to smooth them. The food, the cold sea and her freedom were already reviving her.

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Approaching from under the water, where he had seen her white breast, the single male rose at her side. With possessive and arrogant eyes he began to swim past. Each time he was nearer; now his wake washed against her throat.

Naomi had stood near the edge of the ice, waiting to see the loon resume her natural ways. When the male appeared, Naomi smiled; when he started his courtship, the smile faded, although her eyes were no less sympathetic. She turned to go. At the loon's last glimpse of her, she was making her cautious way over the ice. She was not hurrying. The beach would be lonelier now, without the bird.

On the pearly gloss of the water, the male continued his sweeping march, back and forth. The movement itself was a call. The female loon felt an answering impulse beginning to stir in her. The next time he went by, she swung into his wake and followed him, and her motions became as one with the male bird's.

* * *

ROGUES' GALLERY

Where would most stories be without them—those unspeakable villains and villainesses who give the rest of the characters something to be noble about? Allow one mark for the villain, one for the source and one for the author, making a possible total of 27. The answers are on page 106.

1. *A dreamy old fellow in the Quad., perhaps, but his pen seems to have been far from ineffectual.*
2. *This evil beauty was dead before the play began. But not buried, after all.*
3. *A handsome dandy, a breaker-up of homes—and a murderer too? Out upon him for a Bold, Bad Man!*
4. *The sight of gold made quite a poet of the old fox.*
5. *Those that wish to be foul, foul they will be, as the Irishwoman said; and this wretch certainly* preferred *dirty work.*
6. *Less than half man and wholly fiend, his growing strength was his undoing.*
7. *The girl who broke the milkman's heart.*
8. *This one-eyed monster spelt "window" with an "r" and beat little boys; but the tables were turned on him at last.*
9. *A certain midnight visitor to a Highland manse might have been a dream, except that he left his umbrella behind.*

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ROUND TRIP

"Come," said the clerk, "make up your mind."
"*Per Bacco*, you book me," said Father Valentino

by BRUCE MARSHALL

ON Monday morning Father Valentino took the bus down to the shipping company's offices on Fifth Avenue before Father Motta's sermon had had time to convert him.

For on the previous evening Father Motta had preached on brotherly love. Loving one's neighbour as oneself, Father Motta had said, meant caring about his ease, discomfort, illness or health as one cared about one's own. If a beggar asked you for a quarter it was your duty to give him a dollar or even twenty dollars if you saw that only the larger sum would relieve his need. Charity that was inadequate was worse than no charity at all.

Father Valentino didn't think that it was because of selfishness that he rejected Father Motta's literal interpretation of the evangelical precept. It was intellectual and not emotional love that the Lord had meant when He had commanded men to love their neighbours as themselves. One loved one's family and friends emotionally and the invisible millions in China intellectually. There were ever widening concentric circles of love which were none the less evangelical for being less warmly felt. Anyway, Father Valentino was keeping his eleven hundred dollars for himself.

It had taken Father Valentino more than forty years to save those eleven hundred dollars, ever since 1910, when he had first come as a young priest from Italy to America. And now he was going to spend them all on a big burst of worldliness, on a trip to Italy in a first class liner, with a cabin all to himself and good wine and as many second helpings as he wanted. No less than twenty-two relatives were going to lunch with him in Naples, a brother and two sisters, and nephews, nieces, great-nephews and great-nieces whom he had never seen before.

Not once in all those forty years had Father Valentino been back to Italy. And as he had worked hard baptising, marrying, burying and exhorting he thought that the Lord would understand if he didn't hand those eleven hundred dollars out to anonymous wretches who had probably deserved the misery with which they had been afflicted.

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"I want a round trip to Naples," Father Valentino said when his turn came at the counter.

"Do you?" The clerk, who had been dealing with a succession of dilatory, predatory and stupid women, was harassed and rude. He banged the counter with his fist and glared angrily. "You'll be lucky. Most of the tourist accommodation's already booked, thank heaven. Now I've only got the upper class nuisances to deal with."

Father Valentino was a nervous man and he quailed before the clerk's irate demeanour.

"I want a first class passage," he stuttered. "And a cabin to myself. I don't want to share. Not even with a bishop. It's the first time I've been to Italy for forty years and I want to travel in comfort."

With impatient fingers the clerk leafed through a pile of flimsy papers. "There's a first class cabin vacant on the *S.S. Nestoria*. Sailing fifteenth April. Eight hundred dollars the round trip. Do you want it or not?"

"Please, mister, I want it," Father Valentino said, trying to curb the foreign accent which always came uppermost when he was frightened or excited. "*Tutto comprese?* Wine and tips and everything?"

"Wine and tips are extras. And so are lots of other things. Make up your mind quickly. And make it up properly. I'm too busy to have any time for dillying and dallying and chopping and changing."

"*Per Bacco*, you book me," Father Valentino said. He would still have three hundred dollars over. Two hundred dollars would pay for his wine, tips and out-of-pocket expenses in Italy. And with the other hundred dollars left over he could love his neighbour as himself.

"And no chopping and changing, mind you," the clerk said as he handed him his ticket.

The trouble with Father Motta, Father Valentino thought as he returned to the presbytery, was that Father Motta knew nothing about economics. Even the charity that began with oneself circled outwards. By spending all that money on his trip to Italy he, Father Valentino, was helping shipowners and wine merchants to earn that surplus with which they could love their neighbours as themselves. The Lord had not commanded him to love one neighbour more than another. If he had been going to give away his eleven hundred dollars the only fair way to do so would have been to have distributed them equally among the world's poor; and in that case the sum received by each would have been so minute that it would have been an embarrassment rather than a relief.

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Nevertheless, Father Valentino was still feeling guilty when he returned to the presbytery. It would be pleasant seeing Italy again and her golden fields and blue lakes but deep down inside him Father Valentino knew that the Lord hadn't sent him on earth to do pleasant things.

He met Father Motta in the corridor. It was Father Valentino's day on duty in the presbytery and he had had to ask Father Motta to replace him while he went down town.

"Bought your ticket?" Father Motta asked.

"Eight hundred dollars," Father Valentino said, trying to ease his conscience by being frank with the person who was most likely to criticise his self-indulgence. "But I rather think that it was worth it."

"Lucky cat." Although Father Motta also had been in America for forty years he had never mastered English. "It must be hard to save so much money. I, too, should like to go to Italy but with only a hundred dollars saved I cannot afford to sail across the sea."

Father Valentino felt even guiltier when he remembered that Father Motta was paid the same salary as himself, twenty dollars a month, and had neither more nor less opportunities for saving. It was true that Father Motta, unlike himself, smoked, but that extravagance alone was insufficient to account for his poverty. The only way that Father Motta could have failed to save enough money to go home to Italy was by having practised what he preached and given away all his possessions to the poor.

"I have many relatives to see," Father Valentino said, hoping that Father Motta was not wondering why his sermon had not had greater effect on his brother priest.

"You must not make me jealous by talking about it," Father Motta said. "In the meantime there is a visitor in the parlour. You had better see him now that you are back."

The visitor, Father Valentino saw at once, was a bum.

"*Ebbene*," he said, sure that he was speaking to a compatriot, "what is it?"

The man stood looking awkwardly down at the floor. He was neither dirty nor unshaven as many bums were, nor did he smell of stale drink. The neatness of his shabby clothes was pathetic. Father Valentino put him down as an unemployed book-keeper.

"Please, Father, it is just that I have not any money."

"And so because you have no money you come to see the priest? When you have money you do not come to see the priest. And why have you no money? Because of women or of drink or of gambling or because of all three?"

"*Madonna mia*, but you do me an injustice," the man said.

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"It is because I am ill that I have no money. And I come regularly to your church. Only last night I heard Father Motta preach a beautiful sermon. If you doubt me I can tell you what it was about."

"No, no, you needn't do that," Father Valentino said hastily. "Why are you ill? What is the matter with you?"

"I have a big thing inside my stomach. The doctor tells me that I shall die if it is not taken out. I have been with my firm only for a short time and they will not pay me my salary if I am ill. I have a wife, too, and three children."

"Why cannot you go to hospital? There's such a thing as social security, isn't there?"

"They tell me that I shall have to wait for weeks before I can get a bed in one of the free wards of the hospitals. And the doctors say that I shall die if I am not operated on immediately. Please help me, Father. For the sake of my wife and children. For the sake of our Blessed Lady."

Father Valentino was about to give the man a dollar and tell him to be gone when the Lord's words seemed to thunder in his ear: "*Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum.*" Giving a dollar to a man in urgent need of having a tumour removed from his belly could not be called loving his neighbour as himself; such an inadequate sacrifice could only be called trying to cheat conscience. True charity meant giving all that he had if necessary.

Revelation came to Father Valentino and made him realise that Father Motta was right. The justification of his priesthood, the whole purpose of the Church Militant were that men should obey the two great commandments, to love God and their neighbours; and it was no use hoping to evade the second commandment on the grounds that one observed the first.

"Come," he said, ashamed of his former arrogance. "We'll see what we can do for you."

But the Lord let Father Valentino off with loving his neighbour not quite half as much as himself. The Lord required only the payment of five hundred dollars when the patient was cured.

The booking clerk glared and banged the counter when Father Valentino went back to the shipping company's office and asked if there was any chance of getting to Naples and back for four hundred dollars, with only two hundred dollars to spare for extras and expenses in Italy.

"Knave! Buccaneer!" he roared. "I told you I didn't like chopping and changing, didn't I? Why couldn't you make up your mind the first time?"

"I am very sorry, but I did not know the first time," Father Valentino said, trembling before the clerk's wrath. "You see,

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since this morning charity has compelled me to give away half my savings."

"Clergymen have no business to have any savings at all," said the clerk, unexpectedly echoing Father Motta's philosophy, although in a loud and angry tone. "Luckily for you, however, you're not the only chopper and changer. A tourist scoundrel cancelled his passage only ten minutes ago. Same sailing as yours. You can have it for four hundred and twenty-five bucks. You'll have to share with three other passengers and they'll probably bite you." The clerk opened his mouth and snapped together his strong white teeth. "As I shall do if you dare to come back here chopping and changing again."

Father Valentino accepted with alacrity. He would now have only one hundred and seventy-five dollars to spend on extras and expenses in Italy, but he was still going to be able to see his homeland again.

"And I mean what I say, you chopper and changer, you," the clerk said as he handed over the new ticket.

Father Valentino scuttled out of the office before the clerk could say any more.

As visiting the sick was one of the corporal works of mercy Father Valentino visited the bum regularly in hospital. He generally went in the evening so as to avoid arriving at the same time as the sick man's family. The operation had been successful, and Father Valentino was glad that his sacrifice had been made to such good purpose. But chiefly Father Valentino felt cheerful because the date of his departure for Italy was growing daily nearer and nearer.

One evening he found the patient sitting fully dressed in an armchair.

"You see, I am cured," the bum said. "The day after tomorrow they are discharging me. I shall return home to my dear ones. I shall be able to work again. And all thanks to you, Father."

"Say rather to God," Father Valentino said gently.

"And to the doctors and to the nurses. Although, of course, they have sent me their little bill. Five hundred dollars."

"That was the sum agreed upon," Father Valentino said. "Give me the bill and I shall pay it on my way out."

"*Per piacere*, Father," the man said. "You who have been so kind, will you not give me the money and let me pay the bill myself? It will look so bad if you pay for me. I know that it is no disgrace to be poor, but the world does not look at poverty the way priests do, and I am human and I have pride. Will you not add to your already so great charity this little extra kindness?"

Father Valentino hesitated. He had his own reasons for wanting

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to pay the bill in person. He wanted to show the secular authorities of the hospital that priests practised what they preached. Then he remembered that the Lord liked an unobtrusive as well as a cheerful giver. He was also in a hurry as he had to hear the nuns' confessions at the convent in ten minutes' time, and he had noticed nobody at the desk when he came in.

"All right," he said, handing over the money which he had kept in readiness in his pocket book.

"I'll give you the receipt when you come tomorrow," the bum said. "I can't reward you for this but I'm sure that the Lord will."

Father Valentino knew that the Lord had rewarded him already, by still allowing him to go to Italy even although he had performed an act of charity. He thought about this while he was at the convent, pitying the poor nuns and admiring them because they were required to be charitable all the time and the Lord never allowed them a trip to Italy, not even steerage.

"Some people have all the luck," Father Motta said across the supper table that night. "Some people manage to save money, although how a priest manages to do so I can't for the life of me imagine."

It was with difficulty that Father Valentino restrained himself from telling Father Motta that he, too, could have gone to Italy if he had given up smoking for forty years.

"And Italy is at its loveliest in the early spring," Father Motta went on. "What wouldn't I give to see Rome again! And the Bay of Naples. But even upon such beauty I could not look without guilt, knowing that I had indulged myself when there is so much unsuccoured misery in the world."

"What more do you want me to do?" Father Valentino nearly exploded. "I gave away nearly half my savings to help a sick man recover his health. I'm travelling to Italy tourist class instead of first class. Would you have done as much, I wonder?"

However, he said none of these things, remembering what the Lord had said about turning the other cheek. Also he didn't want to expose Father Motta to the danger of spiritual pride by letting him know that his sermon had had so great an effect.

"You came out of that rather well, I think," the rector said to Father Valentino afterwards. "Try not to think too hardly of Father Motta. I'm afraid he's rather jealous about your trip. His old mother's still alive, you know. She's more than ninety, I believe. Lives at Genoa. I sometimes think, Father, that the hardest thing about being a Christian is that one's got to go on being one all the time."

Father Valentino thought that he understood what the rector

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meant because there were times when he himself would have liked to have been an unbeliever just for an afternoon. He hoped that the rector didn't also mean that he should give up his round trip ticket to Italy to Father Motta so that he might see his old mother again before she died. No, the rector couldn't require that of him, not after Father Motta had been so unpleasant. And the Lord couldn't require that of him either, not after he had given up so much to help that bum.

Next day it was again Father Valentino's turn for staying in the presbytery so he had to ask Father Motta to take duty for him while he went down town to visit the bum. He went in the afternoon because Father Motta said he wanted his evening to himself.

"The very man I've been looking for," the cashier said when Father Valentino passed by the desk in the vestibule. "Your friend was discharged this morning. Here's the bill. Five hundred dollars, as you will remember."

"There must be a mistake," Father Valentino said. "I gave him the money yesterday. He said that he wanted to pay the bill himself."

"Well, whatever he said he didn't pay us a dime," the cashier said.

Slowly, dismally, Father Valentino understood what had happened. The bum's illness had been real enough, but the bum himself was a phoney, and the tale about his wife and three children had probably been lies. Rage filled the priest's heart as the cashier pushed the register across for his inspection. "Giuseppe Arturo Palmonico," he read with blurred eyes, and took a note of the address, although he was pretty sure that it was false.

"You'll have to give me time," he said.

The cashier did not reply and looked so unpleasant that Father Valentino was sure that he intended to start proceedings immediately.

Father Valentino went first to the address which had been written in the hospital register, but, as he had expected, Giuseppe Arturo Palmonico was not known there.

The clerk, who had just been telling a string of fashionable women how much perfume they could bring back duty-free from Europe, flew into a towering rage when Father Valentino approached the counter in the shipping company's office.

"Brigand," he roared. "Didn't I tell you not to come chopping and changing again?"

"But this time I only want to chop," Father Valentino said meekly. "I only want my money back."

"That's even worse. What have you been doing this time?"

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"It's just that I require the money for other purposes."

"I ought really to hold you to your booking, but as I like your face I suppose I'll have to give you your money back." As the clerk, spluttering and fuming, began to make out a credit slip, Father Valentino trembled at the thought of how he must speak to those whose faces he didn't like. "People ought to think twice before they say they want to go to Italy when they don't," the clerk grumbled.

"But I still want to go to Italy," Father Valentino said. "It's just that my circumstances have changed, that's all."

"Well, what the hell's the matter now?" the clerk said angrily, answering the telephone on his desk. Then suddenly his tone altered. "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir. I thought it was McNally, sir. Yes, sir. Of course, sir. A priest, sir. Well, I'll do my best, sir. In fact I think I have already done my best, sir. It's all right, sir. I'll explain when I call you back in five minutes' time, sir."

Father Valentino had become apprehensive as soon as he heard the word "priest". He wondered if the police were after him already for not having paid the hospital bill. He was even more apprehensive when the clerk leaned across the counter with an even fiercer glare than usual in his eye.

"Listen, Father," he said. "You said just now that you still wanted to go to Italy. Well, if I can find a way for you still to go to Italy will you promise me on your word of honour that there'll be no more of this chopping and changing?"

"Of course I shall promise, but I do not see how I can go to Italy without any money."

"You can still go to Italy with only a little money to pay for tips and extras," the clerk said. "But if I work this for you I want you to promise that you'll not come back here chopping and changing. Well, do you promise?" The clerk looked Father Valentino sternly in the eyes.

"I have already promised and I promise again," Father Valentino said, unable to understand what the clerk was driving at.

"I accept your promise," the clerk said gravely. "Listen: that was the director of Napoli Line speaking on the telephone. The chaplain of the *Nestoria* wants to spend three weeks with friends in New York. The director has agreed provided that another priest can be found to replace him. That priest can be you if you like because the director has just asked me to find a priest for him. It means a free round trip first class and three days in Naples. Your wine and a few tips will be all you'll have to pay for. Fifty bucks will cover the lot. Well, what do you say?"

"*Un miracolo*," Father Valentino said, and was sure that it was indeed a miracle with the telephone call coming through like that,

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just when he was making the supreme sacrifice for the bum. And the ship was the same ship as that on which he had originally intended sailing. He wouldn't be able to go to Rome, of course, but he could still have that lunch with his relatives in Naples. Breathing a fervent prayer of thanks, he quickly accepted the clerk's offer.

The clerk handed Father Valentino back his four hundred and twenty-five dollars, less three dollars commission. Then he noted down Father Valentino's name and address to telephone through to the director of the company, in order that Father Valentino might be officially appointed chaplain.

" I'm sorry about the money for the expenses, but there'll be your wine to pay for and a temporary chaplain will be expected to give tips," the clerk said. " I'll keep you advised as to when to report on board." Then he suddenly became fierce again. " Remember your promise, you buccaneer. No more chopping and changing. If you come back here again I'll flay you."

And Father Valentino knew that the clerk really meant it, from the way that he frowned and glared and flashed his eyes.

Father Valentino was exultant as he returned to the hospital to pay over the five hundred dollars to the cashier. He had served the Lord and the Lord had helped him. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

" You've been gone a long time and I have been having to do very much work for you," Father Motta grumbled when Father Valentino returned to the presbytery. " Already I have heard six confessions and baptised two babies. And now there is a lady waiting in the parlour."

The woman in the parlour was poorly clad. She was fat, middle-aged and looked like a hundred other Italian women in the parish.

" Well, and what is it ? " Father Valentino asked impatiently.

" *Santa Madonna, sono tanto afflitta,*" the woman wailed, joining her hands and raising prayerful eyes. " Already I am six months behind with the rent. My landlord is going to put me out on the street tomorrow unless I pay."

" Landlords always say that but they never do put people out on the street," Father Valentino said, hardening his heart.

" But it is true," the woman said. The tears were now running down her cheeks. " It is more than six weeks since my husband has died and I have not been able to find work. There is no money in the house. Please help me, Father. I am at my wits' end and do not know what to do."

" Have you tried prayer ? " Father Valentino asked. Surely the Lord Who had already worked a miracle to help him was not going to undo His own handiwork by requiring him to give money to yet

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another person in distress. But already the uncomfortable thought was occurring to him that the Lord intended his charity to be His answer to the woman's prayers.

"For three weeks I have prayed and always Heaven has been silent," the woman said.

"How much rent do you owe?" As he asked the question Father Valentino remembered that the last bum had been a fraud. Most beggars were frauds. Probably this woman was a fraud too. The Lord could not expect him to go on ruining himself to help swindlers.

"Ninety-six dollars," the woman said. The sum struck Father Valentino forcibly. It was almost exactly the amount which he had left after paying the hospital and the booking commission: seventy-five dollars in the buttoned-up flap of his wallet and the twenty-two dollars left over from the refund of his steamship ticket. It was near enough to be another of the Lord's miracles and a highly inconvenient one.

"Please, Father, please help me. For the love of our Lady. For the love of the saints."

Father Valentino had been a priest long enough to know that people who spoke like that were often liars. But he also knew that Christians were obliged to run the risk of succouring liars in order to avoid the greater risk of turning away the truly hungry and the truly homeless, in whose persons the Lord Himself resided. His recent experience with the bum in no way relieved him from this obligation. If only he had arrived home five minutes later Father Motta would have had to see the woman for him and would have had an opportunity to practise the charity which he counselled from the pulpit.

"Here," he said, extracting notes from his wallet and coins from his pocket and thrusting them at the woman. "Take it. And don't thank me. Go. Go, for Heaven's sake, go before I change my mind."

It was Father Valentino who had the tears in his eyes when the woman went out. He knelt and tried to pray. But it was of Italy and not of heaven that he thought, and when he did manage to think of heaven he could scarcely believe that it was more beautiful. The Lord had dealt hardly with Job, he knew, but somehow that didn't seem to be a reason for His dealing hardly with Father Valentino. He was still on his knees when the door opened and Father Motta came in.

"The supper bell went five minutes ago," Father Motta said. "It's scollops tonight and if you don't hurry the rector will scoff the lot. There's a time for prayer, you know."

"You win," Father Valentino wanted to say as he rose from his

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knees, but he didn't, because he knew that it was the Lord Who had won. And it was this knowledge which enabled him to smile at Father Motta. "Look here, Father," he said. "I've no longer got any money to go to Italy with. Never mind how. But there's a chance for you. The Napoli Line are looking for an honorary chaplain for the *Nestoria's* next voyage to Naples and back. Sailing next Friday. All found, except that you've got to have fifty dollars to pay for extras and tips. That'll take only half your savings. You'll be able to see your mother, too, because the boat stops twice for several hours in Genoa."

"But, Father." Father Valentino's reward was great as he saw the gratitude shining in his brother priest's eyes. "But what about you taking the job yourself?"

"I was offered the job and I took it, but I no longer have fifty dollars. Now please don't ask me why. All that you've got to do is to go down to the Napoli Line and substitute your name for mine."

"I am at a loss how to thank you," Father Motta said. "Perhaps you will be kind enough to come with me to the shipping company's office and explain. Things will be easier that way."

Father Valentino grew grave again as he recalled the booking clerk's threats.

"There's no need for that," he said. "It will be quite all right if you go yourself. You've only got to tell the clerk that I sent you."

After all, there were some things that even the Lord couldn't expect him to do.

* * *

SINGULAR!

Horace Greeley, famous American editor, was a gentleman with decided opinions. When he had one concerning the editorial policy of his paper he enforced it with mailed fist.

One of his ideas which was most irritating to his staff concerned the key word of any newspaper—news. Despite the fact that Mr. Webster defined the word as plural in form but singular in use, Greeley took issue with the dictionary. The word, ending as it did in "s," was undoubtedly plural, he maintained, and plural at all times. Therefore it was always to be so handled.

Mr. Greeley once telegraphed a reporter from whom he had had no word for twenty-four hours: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING STOP ARE THERE ANY NEWS?"

The man promptly wired back: "NOT A NEW."

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THE MERRY MONTH

Here's to the day when it is May
And care as light as a feather

WILLIAM BLISS CARMAN

Both Magdalen Bridge and the Cherwell, where undergraduates gathered in punts, were crowded at 6 a.m. Magdalen College choristers sang the traditional hymn from the tower. About two hundred people made the ascent and heard the singing in the cold sunless dawn.

Late parties were still coming down High Street to join the group on the bridge, estimated to be larger than last year's 2,500. Punts and canoes became congested beside the bridge. A peal of bells which vibrated the tower was followed by Morris dancing in Cowley Place.

Policemen on duty were entertained to breakfast at Magdalen College.

OXFORD MAIL, *May 1st*, 1951

Winter, Away !

And on the smallë greenë twistis sat
The little sweetë nightingale, and song
So loud and clear, the hymnis consecrat
Of loves use, now soft, now loud among,
That all the garden and the wallis rong
Right of their song and of the copill next
Of their sweete harmony, and lo ! the text :

" Worshippë, ye that loveris been, this May,
For of your blisse the Kalendis are begun,
And sing with us, Away, winter, away !
Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun !
Awake for shame ! that have your heavenis won,
And amorously lift up your headis all ;
Thank Love that list you to his mercy call."

KING JAMES I OF SCOTLAND, *The Kingis Quair*

Pleasant Pastimes

Against May, all the yung men and maides, old men and wives, run gadding overnight to the woods, groves, hils, and mountains, where they spend all the night in plesant pastimes ; and in the morning they return, bringing with them birch and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall. And no mervaile, for there is a great Lord present amongst them, as superintendant and Lord

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over their pastimes and sportes, namely, Sathan, prince of hel. But the chiefest iewel they bring from thence is their Maypole . . .

They have twentie or fortie yoke of oxen, every Oxe having a sweet nose-gay of flowers placed on the tip of his hornes, and these oxen draw home this May-pole (this stinkyng Ydol, rather) which is covered all over with floures and hearbs, bound round about with strings from the top to the bottome, and sometime painted with variable colours, with two or three hundred men, women and children following it with great devotion.

And thus being reared up, with handkercheefs and flags hovering on the top, they straw the ground rounde about, binde green boughes about it, set up sommer haules, bowers, and arbours hard by it; and then fall they to daunce about it, like as the heathen people did at the dedication of the Idols, whereof this is a perfect pattern, or rather the thing itself.

PHILIP STUBBS, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, 1583

Pastorale

Yes, I will spend the livelong day
With Nature in this month of May ;
And sit beneath the trees, and share
My bread with birds whose homes are there ;
While cows lie down to eat, and sheep
Stand to their necks in grass so deep ;
While birds do sing with all their might,
As though they felt the earth in flight.

This is the hour I dreamed of, when
I sat surrounded by poor men ;
And thought of how the Arab sat
Alone at evening, gazing at
The stars that bubbled in clear skies ;

And of young dreamers, when their eyes
Enjoyed methought a precious boon
In the adventures of the Moon
Whose light, behind the Clouds' dark bars,
Searched for her stolen flocks of stars.
When I, hemmed in by wrecks of men,
Thought of some lonely cottage then,
Full of sweet books ; and miles of sea,
With passing ships, in front of me ;
And having, on the other hand,
A flowery, green, bird-singing land.

W. H. DAVIES

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Down on the Farm

The first of May brought a burst of summer weather. All the trees and hedges came into full leaf overnight; and from behind the latter, in the evenings, cries could be heard of: "Nay, doan't 'ee Jem," and "Nay, niver do that, soul," from the village maidens who were being seduced.

At the farm, life burgeoned and was quick. A thick, shameless cooing was laid down, stroke on stroke, through the warm air from the throats of the wood pigeons until the very atmosphere seemed covered with a rich patina of love. The strident yellow note of the cockerel shot up into the sunshine and wavered there, ending in a little feather tuft of notes . . . Daisies opened in sly lust to the sun-rays and rain-spears, and eft-flies, locked in a blind embrace, spun radiantly through the glutinous light . . .

STELLA GIBBONS, *Cold Comfort Farm*

Awakening

Spring will come
when your clenched hand
is angry with the cold
and softly opens in the air;
when your mouth speaks
fresh flowers of music;
when your two dark eyes
build in the boughs their nest.
Two trees we are that, together,
feel the spring
longing to reach the sky,
a child within that is eager
to rise and put out hands,
the buds of spring.

MANUEL ALTOLAGUIRRE,
translated from the Spanish by HAROLD MORLAND

Rite of Spring

The chimney sweepers of London have also singled out the first of May for their festival; at which time they parade the streets in companies disguised in various manners. Their dresses are usually decorated with gilt paper and other mock fineries; they have their shovels and brushes in their hands, which they rattle one upon the other; and to this rough music they jump about in imitation of dancing.

JOSEPH STRUTT,
Sports and Pastimes of the People of England, 1801

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★*To Captain Sir Sidney Smith, a lonely traveller in the Balkans, comes the news that his country is again at war with France. A voyage through beleaguered seas to rejoin the Fleet might daunt a lesser man, but this and other hazards are all in the day's work to our intrepid captain!*

SIEGE OF TOULON

by SHOWELL STYLES

SIR SIDNEY SMITH was jogging adventurously down a dusty mountain-track in the Balkans with his servant Titus Wright, blissfully ignorant that his country was at war.

He had left an England at peace and convinced that she would remain so in spite of Burke's fulminations in the House. The notion of travelling clean across Europe to Constantinople had fascinated him ; it presented a prospect of new scenes and adventures such as his restless spirit craved. He took Wright with him as servant and companion, and travelled slowly, with many a divergence, through the Low Countries and Hanover, across Saxony and Bohemia, into Hungary.

Here he was nearly poisoned by drinking foul water and was only restored to health after weeks of careful nursing by Wright. On his farther journey southward into the marches of the Turkish Empire no news of war reached him. At Adrianople, in October, a merchant repeated a rumour that there had been fighting on the shores of the far-off northern sea. But not until early November, when he and his servant, burnt almost black by the weather, arrived in Constantinople, did Sir Sidney hear the truth—that England had been at war with France for nearly ten months.

Within three days Captain Smith was aboard a Turkish brig sailing for Smyrna, where he hoped to pick up a passage to Gibraltar, or at least to Sicily. But at Smyrna there were terrible tales of rape and murder and cutting-off of heads in all the ports of France. No master would take his ship beyond Cape Matapan.

Captain Smith was very far from despairing. For one thing he had reliable news that Hood was at Toulon ; this would shorten his passage from two thousand to fifteen hundred sea miles—he might join the English fleet as much as a week earlier. For another, Wright, in his foraging sallies from the evil-smelling wine shop on the Smyrna quays where they had found lodging, had come upon two English seamen prowling about the alleys. They had, so they

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said, been abandoned there by their ship, a merchantman ; and they added that there were others in like plight, all of them eager to get clear of Smyrna and strike a blow at the Frogs. As soon as he heard this Captain Smith dispatched his henchman to bring these seamen to the wine-shop.

Behold, then, Captain Sir Sidney Smith seated in the gloomiest corner of Hussin's gloomy wine-shop on a November evening. Hussin had few customers, and they squatted, huddled in their robes, at the low tables sipping syrupy wine and taking no notice of the Englishman. There was, indeed, little to indicate the Frankish race of this stranger. Over a Greek tailor's conception of British naval uniform he wore a vast sheepskin cloak acquired in Nish, on his head was a cap of warm fur such as the Kurds affected ; and the beak-nosed features tanned very dark by a year's wanderings might have hailed from anywhere south of the Black Sea.

But for all his twenty-nine years it was still a boyish face, and the eager tilt of the chin as Titus Wright entered the shop held all the old confident expectation of adventure.

Wright, his gigantic form swathed in a gaudy robe, looked like some eastern *djinn* until he doffed his fur cap and showed his square English face a-grin.

" Seven I've got, sir," he muttered, bending down to speak to the captain. " In poor shape, but seamen every man."

" Bring them in," said the captain.

As Wright turned to obey he called to the proprietor of the place, a huddled heap dozing in a far corner.

" Hussin ! Nine glasses of wine—and bring rugs."

The wizened little Turk hastened to do his bidding. While he was spreading dirty rugs on the dirtier floor about the table at which Sir Sidney was sitting the door opened again, letting in a swirling gust from the quays and Wright with seven ragged men.

Wright led his companions forward, stood to attention and knuckled his forehead.

" Crew reportin' for orders, sir," said he.

The seven ragamuffins shuffled and stared at the man in the chair. Sir Sidney had flung back the sheepskin cloak to reveal blue frock-coat and somewhat soiled white breeches. He scanned in turn the faces displayed to him by the wavering lamplight. An unshaven, bleary-eyed gang they were.

" Very good," he said tersely. " Sit down, men. You'll take wine with me, I beg."

Grinning sheepishly, they squatted in a half-circle on the rugs. Wright handed the wine which Hussin had brought. The captain raised his glass.

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" Success to our arms and confusion to the Frogs," he said.

" Amen," said a sharp-featured little man as he tossed off his drink and smacked his lips. The others drank in silence, appreciatively, staring the while at their host. The captain leaned forward, running his eye over the row of dark expectant faces.

" I'm sailing to join Lord Hood at Toulon," he said incisively. " Any man who sails with me will do the same. Is that clear ? "

The sharp-featured man leered up at him, contorting his face into an expression of extraordinary cunning.

" An' no questions asked, cully ? " he demanded.

" My name," said the captain without rancour, " is Sir Sidney Smith, captain in His Majesty's Navy. You will say ' sir ' when you speak to me."

" Aye aye, sir," he muttered. " But I'm wishful to know—"

" No questions will be asked, except for your name and qualifications as a seaman."

" I'm game, then," said the little man defiantly. " James Boxer, that's me—gunlayer, sir."

Captain Smith gave no indication that he now knew the man for a deserter from a King's ship. Wright recorded the name in his book, and one by one the others signified their agreement : Coulson, Beecroft, Carroll, Morris, Humpherson and Lee—all, according to their own statement, able seamen.

" Very good," said the captain, when Wright had finished. " We sail for Toulon with the first light tomorrow."

They stared at him open-mouthed.

" No ship'll put to sea, sir," said one. " Me and Tom Carroll's been trying—"

" We shall be obliged," interrupted the captain calmly, " to help ourselves to a ship."

Boxer, the gunlayer, slapped his thigh and chuckled.

" Steal one, eh ? By hookey, sir, that's the game ! "

Sir Sidney frowned down his nose at him.

" I am not in the habit of thieving from those who are not our enemies, Boxer," he said. " I shall leave what money I have with me in payment. Unhappily it is considerably short of the amount required to purchase the ship I have in mind, but I cannot allow that to stand in the way of my duty."

He glanced over his shoulder at the chattering Turks and beckoned his hearers to draw closer. They did so eagerly.

" The ship I have in mind," said the captain, in a low voice, " is the two-masted felucca lying alongside the north quay. I have ascertained that she is victualled for a voyage to Tunis. That should provide for us. Her sails and rigging appear in good order. Two men are in the habit of sleeping on board. I shall command. Mr.

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Wright"—the big man jumped at the unaccustomed title—"will act as lieutenant, Boxer will act as quartermaster."

"My heye!" chuckled the gunlayer. "'Ere's promotion for Jimmy Boxer—"

He ended with a suppressed yelp and a glare at Wright, who had kicked him on the ankle.

"Attend to me, now," rapped the captain. "I want every man on the north quay before dawn tomorrow, but you'll keep out of sight until you hear me whistle. On that signal you, Boxer, with Carroll and Beecroft, will board her and truss up the two men on board. They are to be bound and gagged but not otherwise hurt—mind that. Coulson, you'll cut her for'ard mooring. Morris, you'll deal with the after mooring. You've knives?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Wright, with Lee and Humpherson, will get sail on her as quickly as possible," Sir Sidney went on. "I trust I've made myself clear. If any man is in doubt, let him speak up now."

The men muttered to each other, but their faces showed excitement and determination.

"Very good." Sir Sidney stood up. "Mr. Wright, allocate positions for the morning to your men, in three parties. I don't want them to wait in a bunch. The *kalif* has a patrol walking the port at night. Carry on."

The men scrambled to their feet, knuckling their foreheads in awkward salute.

"Lord 'elp us!" gasped Boxer to Wright, as they emerged from the wine-shop into the fury of the night wind. "We'll drown tomorrow!"

"You'll drown if the captain says so," growled Wright. "Not otherwise, d'ye see?"

Which sufficiently indicates the convictions of the newly promoted lieutenant as to his master's capabilities.

In fact, the boundless self-confidence which to many appeared as arrogance and rashness was Sir Sidney Smith's weakness as well as his strength. Not infrequently this led to a narrow escape from the failure of his schemes; but sometimes his airy taking-for-granted of men's integrity and capabilities put them on their mettle, and so it was with the seven ragamuffins of Smyrna. Weeks of debauchery had softened their moral fibre, bad and meagre rations had weakened their bodies. But something about this cool, hawk-faced gentleman challenged their manhood, and they responded. An hour before dawn every man of the seven was on the north quay, crouching behind the piled bales of merchandise.

Captain Smith, pacing slowly along the quay with his sheepskin cloak drawn tightly round him, did not even consider the

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possibility of his crew failing him. He had succeeded in obtaining a crude chart of the Cyclades, and he would need it if he were to get safely through that densely clustered archipelago to the open sea beyond Cape Matapan. He would not need to call in for water until he reached Messina. In his pocket were two gold coins, all he possessed. The rest of his money was left in trust with Hussin, to be delivered, on pain of reprisal, to one Enver Ali, the owner of the felucca he proposed to command.

He was approaching the dark shape of the felucca when a figure, gigantic in the gloom, materialized from behind a pile of casks.

"All's taut, sir," whispered Wright. "Two Dagoes snorin' in the after cabin. I've took the liberty of casting-off the extra mooring they'd rigged for'ard, sir."

"Very good."

Captain Smith threw a glance at the long huddle of flat-roofed houses that loomed along the quay. Not a light showed; the quay was deserted as far as the darkness permitted him to see. The rain, chill and invisible, drove at him, stinging his cheeks. The *kalif's* patrol would be sheltering in some corner—if indeed it was going its rounds in this weather.

"Stand by, Mr. Wright," he said, and putting two fingers to his teeth whistled shrilly.

At once dark figures came running out of the gloom. Wright stepped forward.

"After cabin, Boxer!" he muttered. "Coulson and Morris, stand by for the word."

With the exception of the two at the mooring ropes the party dropped on to the slippery deck of the felucca. Captain Smith groped his way aft to the tiller, his mind busy with calculations of wind and sail. From somewhere below his feet came muffled noises—thumps, oaths, startled appeals to Allah instantly stilled. Wright was growling instructions as he and his two men struggled with the unfamiliar brailings of the lateen sails. Simultaneously two white bundles were dumped unceremoniously over the side on to the wet stones of the quay.

"Cast off!" rapped the captain.

The big sails stiffened and filled. The felucca heeled and went plunging away into the dark. The whole operation had taken no more than five or six minutes.

Sunrise found them plunging ahead with a quartering wind, the drab hills of Asia Minor opening farther on either hand as the gulf widened towards the Ægean. Captain Smith relinquished the tiller to Lee, who claimed experience as a helmsman, and made a rapid inspection of his craft. She was a forty-foot keel, decked forward and aft to form foc'sle and after cabin.

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Wright, a roll of cloth in his hand, ducked out of the foc'sle as the captain descended to the waist.

"Best I can do, sir," he said. "There's a halyard ready rigged."

"Bend it on, Mr. Wright, and pipe all hands, if you please."

He clambered to the tiny after deck. The half-dozen men, mustered by Wright, came stumbling aft.

"Men," said Captain Smith, raising his voice against the tumult of wind and wave, "this craft is henceforth one of his Majesty's ships, and subject to naval discipline. I name her the *Swallow*, fleet tender. God save the King!"

He doffed his fur cap, and Wright ran up his improvised flag to the peak. An ensign had been impracticable with his crude materials, but he had made a very passable St. George's Cross, red on a white ground; an admiral's flag, but that could not be helped. The men raised a cheer. None of them, least of all the captain of the *Swallow*—he whose hope it was shortly to command a ship of the line—saw anything at all ridiculous about this ceremony. A sudden glint of sunshine illuminated the tiny flag like an omen.

"Mr. Wright," barked Captain Smith, "hands to breakfast."

On the morning of December 3rd, nearly three weeks after the *Swallow* tender sailed from the port of Smyrna, Lord Hood's squadron lying at anchor in the outer bay of Toulon was surprised by a sudden popping of small artillery. This was the *Swallow's* brass carronade saluting the Admiral's flag.

The Admiral himself was on his quarterdeck when the tiny craft came racing between the great wooden hulls of the line-of-battle ships with the green water creaming under her forefoot. He watched her approach, scowling. The state of things in the port, the dissension between French and Spanish and Neapolitans, above all the notoriously bile-stirring mistral, combined to put him into the worst of tempers. His flag-captain, Lambert, was surprised into incautious speech by sight of the *Swallow's* ensign.

"There's an Admiral of the Fleet aboard that felucca, sir, if her flag's anything to go by!" he chuckled.

"Thank you, captain, I've eyes of my own," snapped Admiral Hood.

A midshipman came running up to *Victory's* quarterdeck. "Felucca hails us, sir," he panted. "Says she's the *Swallow* tender, Captain Sir Sidney Smith."

Lord Hood's leathery face wrinkled itself in a malevolent grin.

"Tell him he may come alongside," he said.

"Aye aye, sir. Pipe the side sir?"

"No, damn it!" exploded the Admiral. "Pipe the side of my flagship for a half-pay captain a year late reporting for duty?" he

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fulminated. "I'll see him damned first, Swedish knight or not! Look at the mountebank—not even in uniform!"

Sir Sidney was wearing his sheepskin mantle and fur cap. Before he leapt for the ladder leading to the entry port, however, he threw off these unofficial garments. He arrived on the flagship's quarterdeck in salt-stained blue coat and worn white breeches much spotted with tar, and walked briskly up to the Admiral, who received his salute with a grim nod.

"Captain Sir Sidney Smith, sir, reporting for duty with eight seamen, from Smyrna. I have the *Swallow* tender—"

"You'll please to render a full report to my flag-captain, *Sir* Sidney," said the Admiral harshly. "In particular, you will give your reasons for wearing that flag at your peak—which I order you instantly to haul down."

"Aye aye, sir." The captain of the *Swallow* gave no sign of discomposure at this unpromising reception. "And my men, sir?"

"Damn your men, sir!" rasped the Admiral ill-temperedly. "Do what you like with 'em—don't badger me!"

Captain Smith stood his ground.

"If I've your permission to victual and refit, sir—"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

The Admiral stumped away.

This interview was the only contact with his superior Captain Smith obtained for a fortnight after his arrival in Toulon.

Captain Smith was in any case quite capable of lookin gafter himself. On the strength of the Admiral's few words he wheedled out of Lambert a comprehensive authority to draw on naval stores for his requirements. Aided by Wright, he set his men to work re-rigging the felucca until he had her as smart as a man-of-war's tender. The long voyage through Mediterranean winter storms had toughened the ragamuffins of Smyrna and taught them to rely on each other and on their captain, and they worked with a will. After long persistence and many applications, the captain got them entered for pay on the books of the *Diomede*, with whose commander he had some acquaintance. And in the intervals between these activities, since no one attempted to give him any orders, he made excursions with Wright into the port of Toulon, with the purpose of picking up information and acquiring a knowledge of the inner harbours.

Each time he visited the port he found the townspeople, those enthusiasts who had so boldly proclaimed their allegiance to Louis XVII some months ago, more apprehensive than before.

The town was in a state of siege. On the great amphitheatre of hills that rises steeply behind the double bay stood a strong *enceinte* of forts and batteries, planned to cover the harbours from attack by sea, from the south. On the north side of this wall Carnot, the

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military genius of the new Republic, was massing infantry and artillery day by day. Reliable report said that he had already 30,000 men there and innumerable batteries of siege guns. To defend this fifteen-mile line of fortifications there were some 18,000 troops, of which 2,000 were English regulars from Gibraltar, and 1,500 seamen and marines from the fleet; the remainder were a hotchpotch of French Royalists, Neapolitans, Spaniards and Piedmontese.

Captain Smith, hiring a mule, rode up to the fortifications himself on a grey day in the middle of December and found little to encourage him. The marine officer who welcomed him had no doubt of his own ability to hold the portion of the line allotted to him, but had every doubt of his neighbours, a Spanish regiment. The camp could be seen at no great distance across the arid hills; a city of tents stretching as far as the eye could see on either hand, with single ant-like figures or coloured masses of men moving to and fro.

"These confounded forts aren't built for landward defence," complained the marine officer, "and if we have to retreat, sir, they command our whole line—and the harbours as well."

Captain Smith pointed to a grey bastion at the western end of the long semicircle of forts and tenailles and batteries. It crowned the summit of a steep hill directly overlooking the Grande Rade, where rode the English fleet like models in a basin.

"With that one fort in their hands," he observed, "the Frogs hold a master-key. They can rake your defences from the rear and at the same time fire on the town, the quays, and the shipping. Damme, major, if I were a French artilleryman I'd concentrate all my fire on that fort!"

The marine looked at him with respect.

"You're quite right, sir. That's Fort Aiguillette, and Lord Mulgrave knows it's the key-point. He's put the two battalions of ours from Gib there. All the same, God help us if there's any Jean Crapaud that tumbles to your conclusion."

Sir Sidney rode away down the steep tracks to the port in a thoughtful frame of mind. He would have been more thoughtful still had he known that a sullen little ferret of an artilleryman from Corsica was at that very moment urging Citizen-General Carnot to concentrate on taking Fort Aiguillette. As it was, he reached the conclusion that the defences of Toulon were bound to fall within a day or two of Carnot's first mass attack. And in the inner harbour lay thirty-one French warships.

Captain Smith considered those warships as the cockboat took him past them on his way back to the *Swallow*. Half of them had their Republican crews on board, prisoners under hatches. Since the

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port must eventually be abandoned, therefore, those ships should be destroyed. As soon as he reached his tiny craft the captain wrote a letter to the Admiral submitting that this should be done, adding that the arsenal and the powder-storage ships ought also to be destroyed at the same time. Receiving no reply to this, he occupied himself in the preparation of a plan and in fitting the felucca to be rowed by sweeps in case his plan ever materialized. Two more days passed before the Republican army made their assault.

The felucca was jerking uneasily at her anchor and the night wind thrummed in her rigging; a storm from the north drove ragged clouds across the moon. On the ridge of hills above the straggling lights of Toulon another kind of storm was raging. From all along the fifteen miles of undulating crest came the bright orange flashes of the guns and their ceaseless boom and rumble. Carnot had begun his bombardment.

All that stormy day it continued. At noon a rabble of Spanish soldiery, packed into barges, came out to be embarked in the ships of the Spanish squadron.

Balls began to fall among the outlying houses of the port during the afternoon. Hard on the heels of the news that Fort Balaquier had fallen came boatload after boatload of Neapolitans, many of them wounded; and with them came the first pitiful refugees from the town. Still the British colours fluttered from Fort Aiguillette. They would not stay there another twenty-four hours if the relentless bombardment continued. And there in the inner harbour, ten of them moored in a close tier absolutely inviting the use of a fire-ship, lay those thirty-one great fighting ships waiting to fall into the hands of the enemy again.

Captain Smith had himself rowed to the flagship, taking his plan with him in his pocket. Captain Lambert received him, informed him that the Admiral had been in Council of War with the French, Spanish, Neapolitan, Piedmontese and British leaders since noon, and politely hurried him over the side again.

Night brought no slackening of the bombardment. From the town came sounds of tumult and a glare ruddier than that of the gunfire. It was said that the Republican elements in Toulon had set fire to the gaol, liberating the imprisoned criminals.

Morning found the waters of the Grande Rade crowded with small craft of every sort conveying Royalist refugees to the safety of the English ships. There were French Royalist soldiers, too—and Neapolitans, and Spanish, fleeing from the imminent wrath of the Republic. Of O'Hara's Gibraltar battalions, of Lord Hood's marines, there was no sign. And over Fort Aiguillette a shred of colour still told of resistance, as did the rumble of gunfire farther

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east along the fortifications. Captain Smith set his crew to work preparing his little ship for action.

Although he was convinced that the British commander would be neglecting his plain duty if he failed to destroy those thirty-one ships before the inevitable evacuation of Toulon, he felt no animosity against the Admiral who refused to consider it. He was well aware that Admirals had other factors to take into their calculations besides those that were obvious to their subordinates; and he was himself a disciplinarian. But Sir Sidney's logical mind, focussed always upon the golden pathway of Duty that led to Glory, regarded obedience to orders only as a means—though the surest means—of keeping his feet on that pathway. To obey an order that would prevent him following the path was, to him, no part of his duty. Thus, without the slightest doubt as to the rightness of his decision, Captain Smith had decided to make an independent attempt to destroy at least some of the ships as soon as the evacuation began.

Fortunately for the *Swallow* and her screw this desperate intention was forestalled. About noon the bombardment on the distant hills intensified. An hour later, through a gap in the great wreaths of dun-coloured smoke that coiled lazily under the pale blue sky, the flat grey shape of Fort Aiguillette appeared. Above its walls floated the Tricolour of the Republic. Captain Bonaparte had won his objective.

Along the line of fortifications the guns still boomed, but it could only be a matter of a few hours before the defenders were overwhelmed—and in a matter of minutes the Republican shot would be falling on Toulon and the inner harbour. Captain Smith pictured the final abandonment of the defences: the battered troops pouring down to the harbour to embark, the victorious French hard on their heels, the Toulon Republicans harassing the embarkation. There should be gunboats to cover that embarkation. He got into his cockboat and was rowed to the *Victory*.

Captain Lambert met him as he stepped on board.

"I was about to send a boat for you, Sir Sidney," he said hurriedly. "Lord Hood requires your presence—Council of War in his cabin now. They've decided to order a withdrawal."

The gorgeous uniforms were crowded round a table with Admiral Hood presiding. The Spanish Admiral Langara was there, Sir Hyde Parker, Sir Gilbert Elliott, General Dundas, and four foreign officers unknown to Captain Smith.

Lord Hood, his wrinkled face drawn with worry, scowled at the newcomer and turned abruptly to the council.

"Captain Sir Sidney Smith, gentlemen, is an officer eminently suitable for this command." There was perhaps a touch of irony in his tone; the command involved a three-to-one chance of death.

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"Captain Smith," he continued rapidly, swinging round to face his officer, "our troops will begin to withdraw an hour after sunset. Six gunboats, three of ours and three Spanish, will cover the embarkation. You will command these and such small craft as can be spared, and you'll remain until the last man is embarked."

"Aye aye, sir."

"You'll make contact with the governor of Toulon beforehand and you'll give such aid to him and the Royalist civilians as you can. You understand your orders—hey?"

"Yes, sir. And the French warships, sir?"

"What about them, pray?" growled the Admiral irritably.

"I submit that I should attempt to destroy them, sir."

"Nonsense, sir! You'll obey orders!" roared Hood, banging the table. "Carry on!"

"Aye aye, sir."

Captain Smith turned away. Before the cabin door closed behind him he heard Admiral Langara begin a protest.

"But consider, my lord, if it were possible to destroy these ships—"

He heard no more; but so much was encouraging. He flung himself into the business in hand without pause. The six lieutenants, three English and three Spanish, who were to command the gunboats came on board the *Swallow* and received concise orders before he dashed into the inner harbour and up to the governor's house. The streets of Toulon were an inferno. The guns were already firing on the town from Fort Aiguillette, and the intermittent crash and rumble of falling masonry added to the terror of the hurrying crowds of refugees making for the harbour.

Captain Smith wasted no time in imparting his orders to the governor. At a little after three he boarded his felucca, to find a lieutenant of the Admiral's staff awaiting him.

"I'm instructed to deliver this to you in person, sir," the lieutenant explained, handing over a sealed note. "The *Vulcan* fireship, Lieutenant Hare, is added to your flotilla and a supply of combustibles will arrive on board within half an hour."

Captain Smith's eyes were bright as he broke the seal and read the Admiral's wavering scrawl.

"*Victory*," *December 18th, 3 p.m.*

My dear Sir Sidney,

You must burn every French ship you possibly can, and consult the governor the proper hour of doing it, on account of the bringing off the troops.

Very faithfully yours,
Hood.

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The new-fallen night was hideous with sound and lurid with red and orange light. From Fort Aiguillette, where *chef de bataillon* Bonaparte raged among his gunners, from the heights of Malbousquet, from the captured batteries on the eastward hills, the flash and roar of the Republican artillery made continuous eruption. In Toulon itself three fires, caused either by the gunfire or by the rioters in the streets, doubled their red glare in the waters of the harbour so that the *Swallow* tender seemed to float upon a sea of blood.

Captain Smith, erect and eager on the tiny after deck of the felucca, glanced astern to where the six gunboats, in two lines of three, crawled like many-legged beetles in his wake. Farther astern still the *Vulcan* fireship was being towed, a decrepit little brig loaded with powder and combustibles.

The felucca, rowed by thirty men, was passing through the narrows between the Grande Rade and the Petite Rade or inner harbour, and the dark waters ahead were crowded with a jumble of craft bearing the last of the refugees from the town. " Mr. Wright," commanded Captain Smith, " make the signal."

Wright had his slow-match burning. A rocket hissed and rose from the felucca's deck. The three Spanish gunboats altered course and headed away to larboard.

Hood's tardy order, putting upon the captain the double responsibility of covering the embarkation of the retreating troops and destroying thirty-one French ships, had called for every ounce of Sir Sidney's energy and organizing power. Apart from the fire-ship, he had received no extra forces for his work. Since the embarkation must be covered at all costs, he had reserved the three British gunboats for this task, though that meant leaving the Spaniards to sink the powder-ships and burn the twenty-one warships which Hare's fire-ship would leave untouched. The *Swallow's* part was to be the destruction of the arsenal.

Sir Sidney glanced astern. The British gunboats were spreading out now, to take their stations. Their guns would cover the quays, where already barges and naval small craft waited to take off the rearguard of the troops. Beyond the gunboat on the extreme left he could see the frigate *Iris* ; she was laden with a thousand barrels of powder, and the Spaniards should by now be preparing to knock a hole in her bottom. *Vulcan* was taking her position.

" Here they come, sir ! " said Wright suddenly.

The *Swallow* was leaving the quays on her larboard beam, heading for the arsenal at the head of the basin, but he could see the swirl and tumult in the crowd as the red uniforms came bursting through to the boats. Then the loom of waterside buildings hid them from view. But it was something to know that the withdrawal was beginning according to plan.

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"Smartly alongside, now!" snapped the captain.

As the felucca slid alongside a broad flight of landing-stairs, Wright popped his head up from below the after deck.

"Mr. Middleton, sir—musket ball broke his arm above the elbow."

"I'll manage somehow, sir," came Middleton's strained voice as he tried to rise.

Captain Smith leapt down into the waist and picked up the canvas bag from the lieutenant's side.

"Come on, Mr. Tupper!" he snapped. "Five minutes in that mast-house and five in the stores is all you'll get."

He ran up the stairs, Tupper hard at his heels. Thirty paces away across the dark stones of the quay was the black square of the arsenal's main door. Tupper went racing off to the building on the right. Captain Smith, stepping over a dead galley-slave, slipped and almost fell in the spreading pool of the man's blood. Then he was at the door. Across it lay the body of a man in uniform—the guard placed there by the governor. Breathing a prayer that the mob had not thought to search the body for keys, the captain bent over him. Here they were—in his side pocket. Captain Smith's hand was steady as he turned the key in the big lock and pushed open the heavy door. A black cavern fronted him, and he stepped inside. Two strides, and his hand touched ranked powder-barrels.

There was no fumbling as he made his preparations: the bundle of combustible wedged between two powder-casks with the end of the slow-match securely attached; the long coil led away towards the door. He knelt in the darkness with the other end of the match held between his knees, took up the flint and steel and struck.

The third time set the slow-match sputtering. Then he was running for the main door. The fiery glow of the open quay was like day after the blackness of the arsenal. The whistle of musket balls was about him as he reached the stairs.

"Tupper?" he gasped.

"Here, sir—mast house and store well alight."

"Push off, then—and give way quickly, men!"

The gap between them and the quay widened swiftly. Fifty yards, a hundred, a hundred and fifty—a great sheet of yellow flame leapt upwards from the quay, the blast of the following thunder-clap whipping the captain's coat like a hurricane of a split second's duration. The Republicans would never get that powder, at least.

"Begging pardon, sir"—Wright was at Captain Smith's elbow—"you heard the first explosion, belike? Those lubberly Dons set the *Iris* afire, 'stead o' sinking her, and she blew up. I'll swear to it they've sunk the *Union* gunboat into the bargain, sir!"

The captain had no doubt that Wright spoke the truth. It was

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just the sort of imbecile thing the Spaniards would do, to save themselves the trouble of sinking the powder-ship properly. And that gunboat had been close to the *Iris* . . .

" See what speed you can get out of her," he jerked at Wright.

Back towards the wider waters of the basin flew the *Swallow*. Sir Sidney was conscious of a curious sense of relief, such as a man experiences when he comes suddenly into shelter out of a roaring gale. It was a second or two before he realized that the cannonade from the forts had ceased. That must mean that the Republicans were swarming down from the heights to enter the town.

The whole harbour was brightly lit now. The great torch of the flaming arsenal astern and the row of burning ships ahead threw a yellow glare over all and turned the water to liquid gold. All manner of craft were pulling frantically out from the port, heading for the narrows leading to the English ships. Fort Aiguillette was firing out to sea, aiming at the waiting ships. The time was getting short. The Republican troops would be entering the streets of Toulon by now. There was no sign of the flames which should mark the ships fired by the Spaniards . . .

" Boat ahoy ! What craft's that ? "

The high-pitched hail came from a barge packed with Piedmontese troops and rowed by English sailors.

" Easy ! " ordered Sir Sidney, and his crew rested gratefully on their oars. " *Swallow* tender, Captain Sir Sidney Smith ! " he replied. " Report to me progress of withdrawal, if you please."

A diminutive midshipman in the stern screeched reply.

" All away, sir—this is the last barge."

" Where are the gunboats ? "

The boy's voice came faintly across the widening gap.

" Back to fleet . . . heard Captain Herries order . . . withdraw, in absence . . . senior—"

The words were drowned in a chorus of cries and oaths.

" Give way, all ! " The captain turned to Lee. " Make for the *Iris*."

The jagged black shell of the powder-frigate still smouldered low on the water. A flight of musket-balls hummed through the rigging, and Sir Sidney glanced at the quay whence that volley had come. White breeches and cross-belts could be seen in the flickering glare ; those were the van of Carnot's victorious army. He realized that unless the Spanish gunboats were still endeavouring to destroy the remaining French ships the *Swallow* was alone under the guns of an enemy port.

" Men in the water—larboard bow ! " came Boxer's hail.

It was half an hour since the *Union* had been sunk by the Spaniard's carelessness. It was just possible that these were survivors.

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Two men were hauled on board, where one of them—a seaman—instantly collapsed. The other was Lieutenant Hare. He dragged himself up to the quarterdeck, a dripping blackened scarecrow well-nigh exhausted but sustained by a fire of anger.

"Thank heaven you came, sir," he stuttered, as great shivers shook his frame. "We were almost done. Ball from the fort sank my boat—only two of us left. The fireship did her job, sir."

Sir Sidney nodded. "Have you seen anything of the *Union*'s crew?"

"I s-saw those bastard Dons sink her with their tomfool explosion, sir—no survivors, I fear." Hare raised shaking fists. "And—you know that was all they did, sir? Blew up the powder-ship and cleared?"

The captain stiffened. "You mean, Mr. Hare, that they made no attempt to sink the ships of the line?"

"I mean just that, sir, the crab-gutted, lubberly—" Blasphemies forced themselves between Lieutenant Hare's trembling lips.

Something passed close overhead with a whooping sound. Up out of the water a hundred yards away rose a tall column of red-glittering spray. Wright bobbed up at the captain's elbow.

"Begging pardon, sir, but I reckon that's Fort What's-its-name—turned a gun on us. Shall I get under way for the fleet?"

Captain Smith pointed beyond the smouldering hulk of the *Iris* to where, to the left of the still-burning tier of warships, the dark shapes of the rest of the Toulon Fleet lay at anchor.

"I wish to go alongside the first of those ships," he said.

As he spoke another shot from the fort splashed close to the felucca's starboard quarter. Wright glanced at the white upheaval of water and then at the captain. His dark face split into a grin.

"Aye aye, sir," he growled, and turned to yell at the oarsmen.

"Mr. Hare," said Captain Smith, "you have done your duty and I shall see that the Admiral hears of it. For the present, you will take that man of yours into the after-cabin. I intend to do what I can to remedy the errors of the Dons."

"But—you mean to burn those ships, sir?" Hare stammered. "The fort will sink you, sure as—"

"Thank you, Mr. Hare. I command here."

The captain's eye took in the rags of clothing which the shivering man was endeavouring to hold round him. He whipped off his own coat and flung it over the lieutenant's shoulders.

"And tell Mr. Tupper to prepare what combustibles remain," he added.

It is recorded of *chef de bataillon* Bonaparte that his initiative brought those light field-pieces of which he was so fond thundering

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down the hillsides into Toulon on the heels of the Republican vanguard. Some few Royalists still maintained a desperate resistance in the main square, not far from the quays of the inner basin. The square was swept as by an instantaneous plague, leaving a heaving, prostrate mass. No one remained standing; but not all those who lay were dead or dying.

It was immediately after this episode that an officer came running up from the quays and gained Bonaparte's ear.

"The English!" he panted. "They're still burning ships in the harbour! Those fools in Fort Aiguillette—"

The little Corsican ordered his weary gunners and their pieces to the Quai de Vauban. They had six field-pieces in position on the Quai de Vauban in twenty minutes. Across a quarter of a mile of black water flecked with red loomed the ships in the inner basin, and one of them—the *Héros*, seventy-four—was already a mass of flames. By the light of that vast torch the flank of the warship next in line was illuminated, and against it in black silhouette the *Swallow* tender made an admirable mark as she lay waiting for her captain.

Captain Smith and Lieutenant Tupper, having successfully dealt with the *Héros*, were having more trouble with the *Thémistocle*. This was one of the ships that had French prisoners on board. Sir Sidney called for Boxer and a party of six armed with cutlasses to board the ship, and knocked away the bars from the hatches. Two hundred Frenchmen, pale and terrified, tumbled up from below. They were ordered over the side to swim ashore, some who were unable to swim being taken into the felucca. It was while Tupper and the captain were below lighting their bundles of inflammable stuff that the cannon on the Quai de Vauban opened fire.

Sir Sidney felt the thud and the shudder of the big vessel as the balls splintered her side. He shouted to Wright to get the felucca round to the other side the of *Thémistocle* and darted below again to make certain that his fire was catching.

Shielded by the great bulk of the *Thémistocle* they were safe from shore gunfire. But already she was well ablaze—the roaring of the flames could be heard plainly. To linger there was impossible. The captain gave the order to make for the harbour entrance.

Weary as he was, and bitter at the thought of those eighteen unharmed ships left for the enemy to use, Captain Smith yet felt the intoxicating thrill of excitement as the *Swallow* began to move out of her shelter. Those gunners ashore would be ready and waiting, and the felucca would have to run the gauntlet of their fire for at least five minutes before she could slip round the corner out of the basin and through to the Grande Rade . . .

The *Swallow* leapt beneath him. A spar came smashing down—the felucca's main yard—and struck him a blow on the right arm,

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numbing it completely. The *Swallow* was swinging round—what was Lee about? But Lee was no longer at the helm, and a great piece of the after bulwarks had gone. Captain Smith seized the tiller with his left hand and headed the felucca for the dark opening between flame-lit buildings that was the entrance.

Wright was shouting at him from amidships.

"Three oars gone, sir, larboard side. Four killed—and I reckon she's took a ball aft below waterline, sir."

"Damme, that's not so bad," said the captain cheerfully. "Take three starboard oars in—and keep rowing, men."

They were gliding behind the flaming hulk of the *Héros* now. If he could keep it between himself and the cannon the gunners would be helpless. "Look to that shot-hole, Wright," he added.

Wright dashed into the cabin and then emerged to rip up the felucca's bottom-boards.

"We'll need to bale her, sir!" he shouted. They were nearly at the entrance now, and out of danger from the cannon on the quay. Sir Sidney remembered suddenly the Grosse Tour that commanded the eastern side of the entrance. Would the French have reached it yet? It was a long way from the main port . . .

A sheet of water rose with a swishing noise from overside and fell across the felucca, drenching him from head to foot. Fort Aiguillette was trying its marksmanship on the *Swallow* now—and she was becoming momently more sluggish.

"Shall I send a man to the helm, sir?" Wright asked.

"No, damme! Put every spare hand to baling, those Frogs as well. We've a long way to go yet."

The captain's heart warmed to Wright as the big man worked; he had Lieutenants Tupper and Hare slaving to plug the shot-holes in an instant, had found balers—two buckets, a saucepan, even the French soldiers' round caps—without hesitation.

They were passing through the narrows now, and the dark bastions of the Grosse Tour were silent. Splashes on either beam simultaneously told that the forts were firing at him, but now the glare of the fires was falling astern and the felucca was slipping into the friendly darkness of the outer harbour.

Captain Smith measured with his eye the space of black water between the *Swallow* and the nearest English ship—they were near enough for him to recognize her as the *Victory*. A bare mile to go; but the water was over the bottom-boards now. The guns were still firing from the forts, but there was no sign of the fall of shot.

Very slowly now the *Swallow* moved forward under the impulse of the two dozen oars. She seemed weary—at the end of every stroke it was as if she halted and sighed. The rest that lay in the deeps beneath her called to her battered timbers . . .

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" Boat fine on the larboard bow, sir ! " called Wright suddenly, and bellowed without waiting for his captain's reply. " Guard-boat ahoy ! *Swallow* tender ! We're sinking—take us on board ! "

The answering hail was drowned by a string of shrill objurgations from Boxer. The six French prisoners, stopping work with the balers, had rushed to the side to peer at the dim shape of the guard-boat. Beneath the slight alteration of trim the *Swallow* rolled, very gently, but with a kind of inevitability, and the black water rushed into her and over her. The *Victory*'s guard-boat, coming up within three minutes, found and picked up twenty-nine men.

For the rest of the *Swallow's* crew there were hot drinks and blankets as soon as they were got up the flagship's side ; but for her captain there was yet a duty to be fulfilled. The Admiral required his report at once, said Captain Lambert.

In the big stern-cabin Lord Hood sat at his table under a swinging lantern. Captain Smith came in and stood stiffly in front of him, dripping sea-water. His breeches were torn and soiled, blood from a splinter-cut on his cheek mingled with the water that ran down his face. He made his report with his customary assurance.

Lord Hood heard him in scowling silence.

" Thirteen ships destroyed ? " he repeated when the captain had ended. " That means eighteen left, hey ? Why didn't you destroy those, sir—hey ? "

" I did my utmost, sir," said Captain Smith, lifting his head a little higher.

The Admiral nodded. He knew all about the defection of the Spanish gunboats. Much as he disliked this mountebank of a Swedish knight he could not but admit that he had done his utmost. When he spoke again his tone had softened to a growl.

" And your ship, captain ? The—hum—*Swallow* tender ? "

Captain Smith seemed to have difficulty in replying. The Admiral looked up sharply, peering at the lean, stained face under the smoky light of the lantern. There were tears in the mountebank fellow's eyes.

★*The loss of his beloved " Swallow " was indeed a blow to Captain Smith, but, as readers will discover in next month's ARGOSY, our gallant Captain, in his command of the " Diamond " frigate, was soon to be launched on even more heroic adventures in the tussle with France.*

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★*This Iraqi folk-tale, one of many handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation in a land of story-tellers, was recited to the translator in an Arabic dialect by an unknown woman of Baghdad.*

HASAN THE THIEF

by E. S. STEVENS

THERE was once a Sultan in this land, and in the town in which he dwelt there was a clever thief. He stole from the houses of the citizens during the night, and none knew how he entered or how he departed. Each night a fresh house was robbed, and at last the townspeople went to the Sultan and said, "We have a complaint to make to Your Majesty. There is a robber who steals from our houses by night. We know not by what door he enters, or how he leaves, but night by night it is the same, he steals first from one and then another."

The Sultan promised that he would look to the matter, and he ordered the police to be vigilant, and set guards everywhere, but it was the same as before, and every night this thief enriched himself at the expense of the townsfolk.

One day the Sultan sat in his diwān, when a writing fell from the ceiling, on the table before him. He looked but there was none there, and on the paper was written, "Your treasure will be stolen this night."

The Sultan was angry and troubled. He said, "What! I have guards and police, and have set watchmen and soldiers everywhere, and yet this insolent thief threatens to steal my treasure!" And, full of care, he rose from his writing-table, went to the women's apartment and entered his daughter's room.

She saw that he was troubled and said to him: "What is the matter with you, papa?"

Said he, "Leave me in peace, my daughter."

Said she, "But tell me, bābā, what it is that troubles you."

Answered he, "Allah keep you, my daughter! Just now a writing fell from the ceiling before me, and on it was written that my treasure would be stolen from me tonight. I have set spies and police and soldiers and watchmen everywhere, and if my treasure is stolen it will shame me before my people. I am the Sultan and if the thief enters here it will blacken my face. For this reason I am angry and troubled."

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And she said, " O bābā, do not be anxious ! Arise, eat with me, and do not sigh, do not trouble ! Allah is merciful, perhaps the thief will not be able to come and steal your treasure ! " And with her comforting words she consoled her father, and he ate supper with her, and then went to sleep.

All the inmates of the palace went to sleep like the Sultan, but the daughter of the Sultan went to her father's room and took down his sword from the ceiling, where it hung suspended, and seated herself in his treasury, beside the treasure chest, with the sword beside her on the ground, saying, " I wish to see from whence the thief will come." She looked at the ceiling, and at the walls, and all about her, and looked and watched, and looked and watched. All in the house were sleeping and it was dark. At midnight she felt the ground beneath her shake, and she said to herself, " Ha ! the thief will come from underground ! "

Then the floor opened, and a man came up through the hole. As he reached the top she drew the sword and cut off his head and waited for the next. There were forty thieves, and as each man came up she cut his head off, in silence and quietly, throwing the dead men aside. Thirty-nine were killed in this manner, and last of all came the chief of them, and as he climbed to the top he said to himself : " What has happened to my men ? And why have they not returned ? I must go and see."

So he also emerged, and as she struck at him with the sword, in her haste she only cut off the top of his scalp, and he quickly put it back, exclaiming : " By Allah, it is you who have killed my thirty-nine men ! Though your bones be of steel, yet I will kill you with my own hand ! "

So saying he fled into the earth whence he had come.

The girl went and knocked at the door of her father, who started up and said, " Who is it ? "

Said she, " I, bābā. Open the door."

He opened the door and asked her, " What is it, my daughter ? "

And she said, " Call the servants."

He called, and the servants and guards and everyone in the palace came running, and brought lights and arms.

She said, " Come, see what is in the room below."

They went to the room where the treasure was kept and there they saw thirty-nine robbers lying dead, and all exclaimed with surprise.

She told them how she had killed the thirty-nine, and how she had wounded the head of their chief, and that he had sworn by Allah that he would kill her, though her bones be of steel, and that her life was in danger.

The Sultan replied, " How can such a man approach you ! Do

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not think of such a thing, it is impossible that he can harm you."

When it was day, the news went through the city that the Sultan's daughter had killed the thieves with her own hand, and all rejoiced with a great joy, saying, "Before we were afraid to sleep, but now these bad men are dead." Everyone came into the palace to look at the corpses of the thirty-nine and at evening they took the bodies and threw them out into the desert to be eaten of the jackals, saying, "This night we shall sleep in peace, praise to Allah."

Two days, three days, one month, twelve months, a year, two years, three years passed, and one day the Sultan's daughter walked upon the roof. She was very beautiful and sweet, there was none like her for beauty. She looked upon the desert, and she saw tents and soldiers, and in the midst a pavilion; and in the pavilion in a golden chair sat a Sultan with a crown on his head, and jewels about his neck, and soldiers standing about him.

She came down quickly and went to her father and asked him, "What is this? And who is this Sultan who visits us?"

Said the Sultan, "Which Sultan?"

Said she, "Go to the roof and see with your own eyes."

And he went and looked from the roof and exclaimed, "*Eya bā!* He must be an important man, this Sultan! And he has brought soldiers with him—perhaps he means war."

He called his wazīr, and bade him come and see also, and then said, "Go and find out who is this Sultan who comes without giving me warning, and with armed men. Is it war? Go, and find out."

The wazīr went out of the city and came to the tents and was taken to the strange Sultan's pavilion.

He saluted him and gave him peace, and said to him, "It is well, please God?"

And the strange Sultan answered, "It is well," and made him sit in his presence. And the wazīr said, "We cannot understand why you have come to us without warning, and with this army of soldiers. We hope that you have peaceable intentions and mean no evil."

The Sultan replied, "Never! *Māku shey!* It is nothing! In no wise do we mean evil. I have come to ask for the daughter of your Sultan in marriage."

And they brought coffee and sherbet and the Sultan treated him with honour, and calling for a string of jewels, he gave it to the wazīr.

When the visit was over the wazīr returned, and went to his master, and said, "This Sultan has no evil intention, and desires no quarrel with you, he has business with you, and wishes to talk with you."

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Then the Sultan said, " Saddle my mare, I will go out and kiss his hand and greet him."

They brought his mare, and he rode upon her outside the city, and went to the strange Sultan, and saluted him. The strange Sultan gave him peace, and made him sit beside him on his couch of gold.

Then said the Sultan, " Why have you come ? We were afraid that your intention was not peaceable when we saw the soldiers. Speak. Say what is in your mind ! "

The other answered, " No, no, no ! I came because I wish to be betrothed to one of your house, and because I wished to ask you by word of mouth and face to face to give me your daughter to wife."

The Sultan thought when he saw how rich the other appeared, " To whom better could I give her than this one ? " And he said, " You are a Sultan, and I am a Sultan, the marriage is suitable. I will give her to you."

Said the stranger, " I wish for her tomorrow for I cannot tarry here ; on the fifth day of the week I must go, and I will take her with me."

The Sultan agreed, and they brought him coffee and sherbet and treated him with all honour and respect ; so he returned to his palace, and called his daughter to him, saying : " Ha ! What a thing has come to pass, my daughter ! This Sultan has come to marry you. I will call the mulla, we must make immediate preparations, for he wishes you to go away with him on Thursday."

The Sultan's daughter answered nothing, but did what her father wished. The mulla was called, the betrothal was made, and the next day the strange Sultan came to take his bride away.

He refused all that they offered him, and when they brought the escort, with gifts and horses, he declined, saying, " I need no escort, and no gifts, I am a Sultan, I have all and need nothing : just wrap your daughter in her 'aba and give her to me, she is all that I wish."

The Sultan was distressed, and said, " How may that be ! I cannot send my only daughter away without an escort. It would be shame upon us ! "

The other replied, " I want nothing, only your daughter. I need no more."

The Sultan said, " Never ! It cannot be ! I must send an escort with my daughter."

Then the other gave in and said, " It matters not. Send soldiers with her, since you wish it, but make all ready, for as soon as it is midnight we shall set off."

And the strange Sultan called his own soldiers, and said to them, " When we are midway, go off, and leave me alone with the bride."

So at midnight they set off : his soldiers before, hers behind, and

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in the centre rode the bridegroom on his mare with his bride on her mare, they riding, the soldiers walking. *Meshi, meshi, meshi—di, di, di, di!* They walked and they walked and they walked, and the next day, as it was agreed, his soldiers walked off and left them.

Then said the Sultan to the bride's escort, "Come!" and they came to him. And he said, "Turn and go back whence you came, for I do not like fuss and pomp! I wish to enter our city quietly with my bride, so return you and leave us!" And he gave them bakshīsh.

The soldiers said to him, "We dare not go, we are afraid that the Sultan will be angry!"

But he persuaded them, and gave them money, and so they turned and went back, and so they were two, she and he, each on a mare, riding in the desert.

They went and they went: till *di!* the sun set, and they came to a wood, deep and thick, and in it were jackals, and boars, and wolves, and lions, and evil spirits. It was a large wood.

He said to her, "Come, we will rest a little here, for you are weary. We will sit under the trees, and I will lay my head on your lap. When we have rested a little, we will mount again and ride on."

She answered, "As you will," and they dismounted, and sat on the ground. Then he took off his turban, and reclined on the ground beside her and put his head on her knees.

Then he said, "Put your hand on my head, and feel it."

She stretched forth her hand, and felt his head, and then in dismay, she bit on her hand.

He said, "You, what do you say?"

Answered she, "There is no hair on your head," but she had perceived the scar that was on it.

He said, "And what then?"

Said she, "There be many men who have no hair on their heads!"

Said he, "Have you perceived who I am?"

Answered she, "I have perceived."

Said he, "You killed thirty-nine of my men, and I am Hasan the Thief. Now I shall kill you, for you are in my two hands. Say, how shall I kill you?"

Answered she, "I am between your two hands, and if you wish, kill me, but I ask you for one thing, I make one request, and when you have granted that, kill me."

Said he, "What is it?"

She replied, "Give me a quarter of an hour alone to make my ablutions and perform my prayers so that I may not die as an unbeliever."

He said, "If I leave you alone, you will escape."

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Said she, " Not so. Tie my legs with that tent-rope, and hold the other end in your hand, and you will know that I am here when you pull on the rope. And when I have washed and said my prayers, I will call you."

Said he, " Good ! " And he took the rope which bound his tent to his mare, and undid it, and tied one end to her legs, and took the other and went a little into the forest.

As soon as he was gone, she quickly untied the rope and fastened it round a date-palm, and said :

"An ogre may eat me
A lion may eat me
A wolf may eat me
And a snake may bite me and I may die,
But he shall not kill me."

Then she went into the deep forest, and walked beneath and beneath the trees, till she reached a tall tree with thick foliage and branches so wide and leafy that they would have hidden ten people. She climbed it and hid herself.

Hasan the Thief waited a quarter of an hour—and he waited half an hour, then he pulled at the rope and cried, " Hurry up ! Have you not yet done ? " but there was no reply, and as it was night, he cried again, " Have you not finished your prayers ? " and pulled at the rope, and went to see why she was silent.

When he got to the place and saw no one there, he began to shout, " Where is she, where is she ? " and he found the rope tied to the palm tree. Then he called out, " Though your bones were of steel, I will kill you with my hands ! " and he shouted and yelled, but he was afraid to enter the thick part of the wood because of the lions and evil spirits ; he only searched the outskirts, and looked in the bushes. And he continued to shout with rage, saying, " I shall kill you with my two hands ! " but at last he got on his mare, and led the other, and went, *meshi, meshi, meshi,* into the desert.

From the tree she saw him depart, and when he was gone she stayed in the tree that night, and the next afternoon she came down, saying, " Now I am rid of him," and began to walk into the desert, not knowing whither she went but going where Allah directed till she saw a house-of-hair. And there were Arabs in that tent, an old man and an old woman. She saluted them, and they asked her what she wanted, and whence she came.

She said to the old couple, " Oh, my father and oh, my mother, let me come and live with you, and I will cook for you and look after you, just for my keep. I will fetch your thorn and your water, and look after the sheep, and work for you and be your servant."

The old woman replied, " Better than that ! We have no

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children, my old man and I are alone, you shall be our daughter, and this our tent is yours."

And they were happy and said to each other, " She is so sweet that Allah must have sent her to us," and they put her in a blue smock like a Bedawīya, with a coarse 'aba, and she lived with them as their daughter for three years. And she cut their thorn, and fetched their water, and milked the sheep, and made butter, and ground flour, and made bread, and worked for them.

Now one day the son of a Sultan who lived near that place came hunting with a single servant, and the name of the servant was Feyrūz. And it was summer and hot, and the prince became thirsty and when they saw the black tent, the prince said, " Feyrūz, I am thirsty, go to yonder house-of-hair and ask them for water."

Feyrūz went, and came to the tent, and asked for a little water for his master.

The girl arose, and poured him water from the skin, and when he saw her, Feyrūz marvelled and said in himself, " I never saw such beauty before," and his understanding flew away as he gazed at her. He went back to his master, and said, " Oh, bey! the girl who poured me out this water is beautiful! Never have I seen such loveliness! "

When he heard these words, the prince poured the water out and took the cup himself to the tent, and said, " Can I have a little more to drink? I am very thirsty."

And the girl came and answered, " With pleasure! " and he drank and looked at her, and as he looked, his heart became dough, and he said in himself, " Can there be anything more beautiful in the world! And this beauty is living with the Arab."

And he marked that the tent was swept and carpeted and clean and well kept.

He turned and went back to his house with his slave, but he could think of nothing but the girl. " Is there such beauty! Can such sweetness be! " and he yearned so much for her that he fell sick and took to his bed. His father sent for a physician, and one came and visited him. After he had seen him, he went to the Sultan and said, " Your son is not ill, he is love-sick! Go to him, find out who is troubling his peace, and who is in his mind."

The Sultan cried out, " Who can it be? But I will not ask him, I will send his old nurse, before whom he will not be ashamed to speak freely, and he will perhaps tell her for whom he is yearning."

He sent for the nurse and said to her, " Go today to my son and find out what is ailing him, who has disturbed his peace of mind, and for whom he is yearning."

So the woman went to him, and stroked his cheeks, and said,

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" My darling, I am your mother, my milk is in your belly, I have been a mother to you when you were small, and I am grieved to see you thus. Tell me, what ails you ? "

He replied, " I cannot tell you."

She said, " Tell me. For perhaps I can do you a good turn and help you ! "

Then he told her, " I was hunting, and it was hot, and I was athirst, and we went to the tents of the Arab there, and a girl gave me drink, and she was beautiful as the full moon. My heart became dough and I want her for my own."

Said the woman, " Ah, my darling ! Why did you not tell me ? I will do what I can and I will speak to the Sultan. Do not sigh. Do not be troubled."

She went her road and came to the Sultan and said, " What shall we do ? Your son is longing for a maid of the tribes, beautiful as the moon. Bring her and betroth her to him, for better that than let him die of longing."

The Sultan replied, " Good. Go, and take a slave with you, and betroth the girl to my son."

The nurse returned to the boy, and said, " What did I tell you ! I have seen your father, and he has told me to go and get the girl and betroth her to you."

How he rejoiced ! How full of happiness was his heart !

The woman went with the slave into the desert, *meshi, meshi, meshi*, till they came at length to the house-of-hair, and there was the old man and his wife, who gave them peace, and called to them to enter and rest. How astonished the nurse was to see the tent so clean, so swept, so spread with mats. She entered and the slave remained without, and they brought her water, and said, " Welcome, please to sit down and rest ! " and treated her with respect and hospitality.

After greetings and inquiries after health she said to them: " I have a son, an only son, and he wishes to marry your daughter. I wish to take her with me, what do you say, O good old woman ? "

The old woman answered, " As my daughter wishes ! If she wants to leave us she may go with you, she may do as she desires and marry your son or refuse him."

And the old man said, " Aye ! *Keyfha !* As she wishes."

Then the nurse turned to the girl and said, " And what do you say, my daughter ? "

The girl answered, " First, I wish to know something. Is this young man really your son ? "

The nurse answered, " No, he is not my real son, but I suckled him when he was a babe."

" You have come. And upon my eyes and head be it ! But why

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did you come and not his real mother? Let his mother come, and I will answer."

Then she gave the nurse coffee and treated her with honour and respect, and gave her peace, and the woman went her road and returned to the Sultan. She said to him, "The girl I have seen and she is lovely, and I have never seen a tent like their tent, swept and garnished. The parents told me that all was in the hands of the girl, and when I asked her, she said, 'Let his own mother come, and I will give an answer.'"

The Sultan replied, "*Al hākim hakīm!* The judge is wise. This can be no daughter of the Arab! She would not have spoken thus. Even had not my son desired her, I should have desired her for this her conduct!"

Then he went into the harem, and went to see his wife and said to her, "Rise, take a slave with you, and go out to the desert and ask this girl who is in the house-of-hair to marry our son."

The next day the Sultan's wife took a slave, and went in a carriage to the house-of-hair in the desert. She descended from the carriage and entered the tent, and saw that it was swept and garnished so that any Sultan's daughter could have dwelt in it. And when she saw the girl, how sweet she was, she loved her at sight. They made much of her, and honoured her and gave her coffee and sherbet and cigarettes, and then she turned to the old woman and said, "I have come to betroth my son, my only son, to your daughter. What do you say?"

The old woman said, "As my daughter wishes."

The old man said the same.

Then she turned to the girl and said, "And what say you, my daughter?"

The girl replied, "You have come, and on my eyes and head be it. I will marry your son, your only son, but I make a condition, and if you do not carry it out, I will stay in my place and he in his."

Said the Sultan's wife, "Tell me the condition. Speak!"

She said, "I want from you a castle of crystal set in the midst of the river, reached by a stairway that can be put up or removed at will, and round the castle three moats and three drawbridges, and in the outermost moat a pair of lions that have not been fed for seven days. I will take your son to husband on this condition and if you cannot fulfil it, I will stay in my place and he in his."

This. And the Sultan's wife rose, and took her leave, and returned with her slave to the Sultan and told him all that she had seen and all that she had heard.

When the Sultan had listened, he exclaimed, "Indeed this is no daughter of the Arab. This is one of high estate who has come to dwell amongst them. I will do what she asks."

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And he rose quickly and called a builder, and told him to build a castle in the midst of the river, as she had said, of crystal, with a drawbridge and three moats, and hungry lions in the third moat.

It was finished in fifteen days, and the Sultan sent and made the betrothal, and brought the girl to the palace. They took her to the bath and washed her and admired her beauty, and prepared her for the reception of the bridegroom. Then they crossed to the castle and she entered it and sat waiting in the marriage chamber.

The story returns to Hasan the Thief. Now he was walking that afternoon on the river bank, and he saw the castle, and asked of the people, " What is that castle in the midst of the river ? " They answered him, " This, this is the castle which the Sultan's son built for his bride, and his bride is the daughter of the Arab," and they told him all they knew. In his heart the thief thought, " That is my enemy. That is she, and this night, Allah willing, I will slay her."

It came to sunset, and the bride sat waiting in the marriage chamber. The bridegroom, for his part, went and prayed in the mosque, and afterwards came with his companions to the river, and took boats and reached the castle, and there they feasted. At last he entered the bridal chamber, and found the bride sitting awaiting him. When they had greeted each other, the bride said to him, " You are but newly risen from sickness, and are tired now, rest a little, come, lie on the bed and sleep."

The bridegroom did as she wished, he stretched himself on the wedding-bed and went to sleep. But the girl was afraid to sleep, for she was afraid of Hasan the Thief.

At one o'clock in the night, there was a noise in the roof, and she said to herself, " He is coming by the roof ! " and a little after, there was a hole in the roof, and a man appeared. *Khr, khr, khr !* He slid down by a rope and stood before her and said :

" How shall I kill you ? "

She answered, " You mean to kill me ? "

Said he, " With my two hands I will kill you."

Said she, " Why kill me here ? People will hear and be alarmed. Take me into the desert and kill me there."

Answered he, " Yes. Walk before me."

Said she, " No, you walk before me and I will follow."

So they walked together, he first and she second over the first moat, and the second moat, but when they were walking over the third moat she gave him a push with all her force and sent him over into the moat where the lions were waiting. They were ravenous, and they fell upon him and one seized one leg and the other the other and tore him in two and began to eat him up.

Then she returned to the wedding-chamber and woke the

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bridegroom, saying, " Rise ! We must return to your father, and tell him this story, and then I will be yours."

And she took him to see where Hasan the Thief was being devoured, and told him that he had tried to kill her. They called to all who were in the castle, and they too beheld, and then they took a boat and went across to the Sultan's room, and knocked at the door.

He said, " Who is it ? "

The girl answered, " I, bābā, your daughter and your son, and we wish to speak with you."

He opened to them, and said, " Speak ! "

They entered and kissed his hands, and said, " Come, see what lies in the moat of our castle."

He rose and went with them, and when he saw what was in the moat he asked for explanation.

Said the girl, " I am no daughter of the Arab, I am the daughter of such-and-such a Sultan, and I killed thirty-nine robbers with my own hand, and this was the fortieth." And she told him the whole story from the first to the last.

Then the Sultan answered, " Well, I know your father, he is my great friend ! Indeed I said you were no daughter of the Arab."

And for seven days and seven nights they made rejoicing, and beat drums, and made feast.

* * *

YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL

Jones was waiting for a bus when a stranger approached and asked the time. Jones ignored him. The stranger repeated the request. Jones continued to ignore him. When the stranger finally walked away, another waiting passenger said curiously :

" That was a perfectly reasonable question. Why didn't you tell him what time it was ? "

" Why ? " said Jones. " Listen, I'm standing here minding my own business and this chap wants to know what time it is. So maybe I tell him what time it is. Then what ? We start talking, and this chap says, ' How about a drink ? ' So we have a drink. Then we have some more drinks. So after a while I say, ' How about coming up to my house for a bite to eat ? ' So we go up to my house, and we're eating bread and cheese in the kitchen when my daughter comes in, and my daughter's a very good-looking girl. So she falls for this chap, and he falls for her. Then they get married and any chap that can't afford a watch I don't want in my family."

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KISSES A-PLENTY

What is a kisse? Why this, as some approve:
The sure sweet cement, glue, and lime of love

ROBERT HERRICK

Kisses kept are wasted;
Love is to be tasted.
There are some you love, I know;
Be not loath to tell them so.
Lips go dry and eyes grow wet
Waiting to be warmly met,
Keep them not in waiting yet;
Kisses kept are wasted.

EDMUND VANCE COOKE

Au Point

A love scene was in progress. At least, it appeared to be a love scene, but somehow it never seemed to get going.

The village maiden was making sheep's eyes at a young man with a swelling chest. If ever a girl was saying "Come on" she was saying it, and if ever a chest were swelling because its owner was activated by "Coming on" instincts, this was the chest in question.

But nothing happened, nothing, that is to say, in the nature of a clinch. The eyes shouted "Come on" in even louder accents, the chest swelled to bursting point (till, in sympathy, one found oneself puffing out like a pouter pigeon), fingers were twined . . . eyelashes fluttered like the wings of moths—but no clinch.

"This can't go on," I found myself muttering. "But really, *no*. All this titillation. Something will snap, burst, come undone." And *sotto voce* I said to my friend:

"When *is* he going to kiss that girl?"

"Kiss her?" he echoes in astonishment

"Yes, kiss her. When?"

"Never."

"But why not?"

"They never do."

"What—those two? Is there anything the matter with them?"

"No. Not only those two. Nobody."

"Nobody kisses?"

"Nobody, never. Not on the Indian screen."

I took a last hasty look at the swelling chest. It was—as the

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French say about steaks—*au point*. Something was about to burst. This was past endurance. I grabbed my friend's arms and we went in search of a fresh limejuice. While drinking it I learnt the astonishing history of The Kiss on the Indian Screen. Astonishing because it is a history that has not yet begun to be written.

The kiss is taboo.

Only once . . . in a gipsy film called "Zarinah" did an iconoclastic director allow a male star to press his lips against those of a female star. He did not press them very hard and he did not press them very long, but he pressed them quite long enough to cause a major explosion. It may not be true that large numbers of people immediately jumped from high buildings to propitiate the Gods, but it is true that there were angry scenes in the theatres, meetings of protest all over the country, and an almost unanimous outcry from the critics.

"Disgusting Western degradation! Keep the Indian screen clean!" So ran the headlines.

"Zarinah" was India's first film kiss—and her last.

BEVERLEY NICHOLS, *Verdict on India*

Stratagem

"I saw you take his kiss!" "'Tis true."
"O, modesty!" "'Twas strictly kept:
He thought me asleep: at least I knew
He thought I thought he thought I slept."

COVENTRY PATMORE

Smitten

Mr. Wooly, of course, did not see that kiss. He experienced it, and as for describing it, he would never have attempted that. When at last she drew away from him, as her arms and his dropped, he reached backward for the wall, leaned against it, slid slowly downward toward a chair that happened not to be there. Arriving at the floor, his torso wavered upright but for a moment, then he lay down while she, less affected, wandered about the room, admiring—or checking over—its elegant contents.

THORNE SMITH, *The Passionate Witch*

Right Heartily

This done, he took the bride about the neck
And kiss'd her lips with such a clamorous smack
That at the parting, all the church did echo.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *The Taming of the Shrew*

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Warning

Young gentlemen, pray recollect, if you please,
Not to make appointments near mulberry trees.
Should your mistress be missing, it shows a weak head
To be stabbing yourself, till you know she is dead.
Young ladies, you should not go strolling about
When your ancient mammas don't know you are out ;
And remember that accidents often befall
From kissing young fellows through holes in the wall !

J. G. SAXE

Never Before

There was a look in his face that she had never seen there before.

He's going to kiss me. Quickly the thought came to her, and with it the posing of quick questions : should she lift her cheek in comradeship ; or her lips in friendliness, in one of those calm kisses that resolve a complicated mood into secure affection ? No, she thought, it's going to be a real kiss.

It was in a mixed mood that she thought that ; half in self-vindication to reveal herself as she really was, to have no secrets from this man who knew her better than any man had done. He had seen her loyal as a fiancée, dutiful as a wife, devoted as a mother. Let him now see her as she was or, rather, as she could be, as a lover. It was that in part ; in part, too, it was a desire to possess, to seal this man as hers.

She faced him. As his arms went round her, she went straight and resolute into their hold. In this one kiss she had to obliterate the memory of ten thousand kisses ; in this one kiss she had to outsay and silence those other women.

This is the first kiss of my life, she thought. I've been kissed, but I've never kissed before.

As his arms slackened their hold upon her shoulders there was a shaken look upon his face, a startled look. With triumph she read its meaning. So now you know, she thought, what I am, or, rather, what I could be, to you, for you.

His voice was shaking when he spoke.

" But this, this is going to be pretty serious."

ALEC WAUGH, *Jill Somerset*

Total Abstention

Lips that touch wine jelly
Will never touch mine, Nellie.

Author Unknown

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THE WINDOW

Across continents, thousands of miles away—the sounds of his youth

by RAY BRADBURY

THE old man opened his eyes swiftly and sat erect in his wheel chair. He jerked his cold hand out and found the telephone. It was still there! He held it against his chest for a moment, blinking.

"I don't like that dream," he said to his empty bedroom.

It was bad enough—the telephone company coming to the house tomorrow to take the phone away—without the old man seeing it in his dreams again and again.

At last, his fingers trembling, he lifted the receiver and dialled the long-distance operator. He gave her the number and waited, watching the bedroom door as if at any moment it might open, and a vast invasion of doctors, nurses and relatives might swarm about him, yelling and critical.

"Calling Mexico City," said the operator. "Erickson 3899."

And then, at last, the far away, but infinitely clear voice:

"*Bueno.*"

"Hello, Jorge!" cried the old man.

"Señor Bolton! Again? This is costing money."

"Let it cost! You know what to do?"

"Yes. The window."

Thousands of miles away, in another land, in an office in a building in that land, there was the sound of footsteps retreating from the phone. The old man leaned forward, gripping the receiver tightly to his wrinkled ear that ached with waiting for the next sound.

The raising of a window.

Ah, sighed Mr. Bolton.

The sounds of Mexico City on a hot yellow noon rose through the open window into the waiting phone. He could see Jorge standing there holding the mouthpiece out, out into the bright day.

"Señor . . ."

"No, no, please. Let me *listen.*"

He listened to the hooting of many metal horns, the squealing of brakes, the calls of vendors selling yellow bananas and jungle oranges on their stalls. Mr. Bolton's feet began to move, hanging

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from the edge of his wheel chair, making the motions of a man walking. He squeezed his eyes tight shut. He gave a series of immense sniffs, as if to sense the odours of purple grapes and the meats hung on iron hooks in sunshine, cloaked with flies like a mantle of raisins; the smell of stone alleys wet with morning rain. He could feel the sun burn his cheek, and he was twenty-five years old again, a camera slung from his shoulder, walking, walking, looking, smiling, happy to be alive, very much alert, drinking in colours and smells.

A rap on the door. He hid the phone instantly under his dressing gown.

The nurse entered. "Hello, Mr. Bolton," she said. "Have you been good?"

"Yes." The old man's voice was mechanical. He could hardly see. The shock of a simple rap on a door was such that part of him was still in another city, far removed. He waited for his mind to rush home—it must be here to answer questions, act normally, be polite.

"I've come to check your pulse."

"Not now!" said the old man. "Later!"

"You're not going anywhere, are you?" She smiled.

He looked at the nurse steadily. He hadn't been anywhere in ten years.

"Give me your wrist."

Her fingers, hard and precise, searched for the sickness in his pulse like a pair of callipers.

"What have you been doing to excite yourself?" she demanded.

"Nothing."

Her gaze shifted and rested on the empty phone table. At that instant a horn sounded faintly, three thousand miles away.

The nurse took the phone from him as if it were a sick animal. "You promised you wouldn't do this. We agreed that if you made only one call a week you could keep the phone. I even told the telephone company *not* to send a man to disconnect the service tomorrow. Now I'll just have to make them take it out."

"This is my house, my phone," the old man protested. "I pay your salary!"

"To make you well, not get you excited." She wheeled his chair across the room. "To bed with you, now, young man."

He looked back at the phone and kept looking at it.

"I'm going out shopping for a few minutes," the nurse said. "Just to be sure you don't use the phone again, I'm hiding your wheel chair in the hall."

She went out and shut the door. In the hall downstairs, he

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heard her pause and dial the extension telephone.

Was she phoning Mexico City? She wouldn't dare!

He heard the front door shut.

He thought of the last year here, alone, in his room, and the secret, narcotic calls across continents, an isthmus, whole jungle countries of rainy forest, blue-orchid plateaus, lakes and hills . . .

He lifted himself in the cool, white bed. Tomorrow the telephone would be gone. What a greedy fool he had been! He slipped his brittle ivory legs down from the bed, marvelling at their desiccation. They seemed to be things which had been fastened to his body while he slept one night, while his younger legs were taken off and burned in the cellar furnace. Over the years, they had destroyed all of him, removing hands, arms and legs and leaving him with substitutes as delicate and useless as chess pieces. And now they were tampering with something more intangible, the memory; they were trying to cut the wires which led back into another year.

He was across the room in a stumbling run. Grasping the phone, he took it with him as he slid down the wall to sit upon the floor. He got the long-distance operator, his heart exploding within him, faster and faster, a blackness in his eyes. "Hurry, hurry!" He waited.

"*Bueno?*"

"Jorge, we were cut off!"

"You must not phone again, Señor Bolton," said the faraway voice. "Your nurse called me. She says you are very ill. I must hang up."

"No, Jorge! Please," the old man pleaded. "One last time, listen to me. They're taking the phone out tomorrow. I can never call you again."

Jorge said nothing.

The old man went on. "For the love of God, Jorge! For friendship, then, for the old days! You don't know what it means. You're my age, but you can *move*. I haven't moved anywhere in ten years."

He dropped the phone and had trouble picking it up, his heart was so sick. "Jorge! You *are* still there, aren't you?"

"This will be the last time?" said Jorge.

"I promise!"

The phone was laid on a desk thousands of miles away. Once more, with that clear familiarity, the footsteps, the pause, and, at last, the raising of the window.

"*Listen,*" the old man whispered to himself.

And he heard a thousand people in another sunlight, and the

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faint, tinkling music of an organ grinder playing *La Marimba*—oh, a lovely, dancing tune.

With eyes tight shut, the old man put up his hand as if to take camera shots of an old cathedral, and his body was heavier with flesh, younger, and he felt the hot pavement underfoot.

He wanted to say, " You are still there, aren't you ? All of you people in that city in the time of early siesta, the shops closing, the little boys crying *lotería nacional para hoy !* to sell the lottery tickets. You are all there, the people in the city. I can't believe I was ever among you. When you are away from a city it becomes a fantasy. Any town, New York, Chicago, with its people, becomes improbable with distance. Just as I am improbable here, in California, in a city by the sea. All of us improbable to one another because we are not present to one another. And so it is good to hear the sounds, and know that Mexico City is still there and the people moving and living . . ."

He sat with the receiver tightly pressed to his ear.

And at last, the clearest, most improbable sound of all—the sound of a green tram-car going round a corner—a tram-car carrying alien brown people, far, far away. The metal crash of its wheels on the hot blue rails. The fading of its brassy thunder in the warm distance.

The old man sat on the floor.

Time passed.

The door downstairs opened. Footsteps came upstairs.

The nurse stood at the door, prepared to be angry, when she saw the old man seated there on the floor.

There was something in his silence that made her shut her opened mouth.

She approached, almost on tiptoe. She had to work hard, bent down, to disengage the telephone from his now quite cold fingers. And when she lifted the receiver to her own ear she heard one last, far sound.

Thousands of miles away, the closing of a window.

* * *

DOWN IN THE FOREST . . .

A speaker was giving a lecture on forest preservation.

" I don't suppose," said he sententiously, " that there is a person in this hall who has done a single thing to conserve our timber resources."

Silence ruled for several seconds, and then a meek voice from the rear of the hall timidly retorted :

" I once shot a woodpecker."

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SPRING SONG

It was like a revelation—a girl's face beneath an umbrella in the gloom of a storm

by H. E. BATES

ALL day the June sky had stretched out in perfect serenity, like an immense blue pond without a ripple or shadow. Beneath it the earth seemed to tremble like a thirsty animal chained just beyond reach of water, while the trees between sat in a sort of solemn imposing lethargy, like judges presiding over some interminable suit between earth and heaven. I took off my coat as I descended the hill. The sweat ran down my nose in a warm trickle. Thick, snowy dust rose up and clouded the brightness of my shoes just as a faint ominous haze had begun to cloud the horizon beyond the reposeful roofs of the town below. One or two people eyed me curiously as they shot past in their traps to market. Sometimes when they had gone I grinned after them with the faintly cynical assurance of a young man having made an impression, and was happy.

As I came to the streets of the town, however, I struggled into my coat again. I had the sensitive pride of a young man, too, and already, besides, the dark haze on the horizon seemed to have shot forward as if under some mysterious urge from beyond the edge of the earth. I didn't like the look of it, and I began to do my trivial pieces of shopping with an alacrity which brought the sweat running down my nose faster than ever.

Finally, at a bookseller's in the market-place, I paused abruptly in the act of turning over a page. The proprietor put his face outside the door as if suspicious of something not quite right in the sky. Instinctively I followed his glance. I uttered a cry of stupid amazement which he silenced abruptly with the laconic pronouncement: "Thunder." We nodded sagaciously at each other like men resolving to share a secret. The next moment he left the shop and began to gather in his trays of books with the air of a conscientious shepherd.

I, too, hastened outside. The grey awnings of the market-stalls were already flapping ominously in the breeze that had sprung up. The sky was three-quarters dark under an oppressive advance of iron-coloured cloud. Beneath the awnings little pools of fruit and confectionery, flowers and cloth began to gleam in that sinister light as if afire.

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From the doorway of the book-shop, to which I had hastily retreated again, I watched the market soak rapidly under an incredibly fierce onslaught of thunderous rain. The grey polish of the cobbles gave up the gloom of the sky again. One or two people flitted like dark spirits across the square, hunching their shoulders; little crowds of others clung to the doorways in dark bunches. Now and then an umbrella would spring up like a mushroom in that brief, gloomy night and then vanish abruptly. Colour and movement began to vanish, too, until nothing seemed to exist but grey and a deep thunderous brown, and there was no movement but that of the rain. A clock above me boomed half-past three, like a thing mourning its isolation—then the square was silent.

It was as if all this had happened in preparation for an event—as for the entrance of a principal in a play. I became conscious of colour and movement entering the scene as if by magic. Across the deserted square there advanced slowly a white horse drawing a green trap.

I watched its approach. As it came nearer I saw that the animal's body was already drenched with rain and was steaming and in places yellow. The reins sagged listlessly up to the head, which drooped a fraction, the tail lay plastered wetly against the quarters, and in spite of its colour it looked no less oppressive than the rest of the square into which it had suddenly come. A yard or two away from me it shuddered stormily and became still. At the sight of that drenched wreck, my interest suddenly became of the most apathetic kind.

Then from that fit of silent gloom I remember being wrenched with an abruptness against which I wanted to protest with a cry. And in the sudden emotion of surprise at finding myself confronted with that girl in the trap itself, staring out with solemnity from the great umbrella arching over her, I believe I could have done so without a qualm.

As it was I only watched her. In her stillness she was like a little pale image in some dark sanctuary. Only her eyes once or twice travelled quickly over the rainy road, the sky and the clusters of people about the shops, and then returned to a dreamy contemplation of the horse's head. I began a contemplation also—only half-conscious of what I did—against the intensity of which her face remained as immobile as if modelled in alabaster.

Gradually I began to wonder all sorts of things about her—her christian name, why she was alone, how old she was, and as to her secret of the naïve fascination in her still form. Every moment a new army of impressions besieged me. I remember wanting to say something arresting and fine in order to make her look at me. Yet I believe the slightest suggestion of a glance would have aroused me

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to a point of demonstrative exultation. The foolish part of it was that I couldn't explain even my slightest emotion; my brain seemed capable of nothing but one silent, ridiculous demand: "Why doesn't she look at me? Why doesn't she look at me?"

I must have cut the most ludicrous figure. Had she by any chance become aware of me she must have burst into uncontrollable laughter. Now I am glad she never once looked at me. I don't believe I could have endured the disturbance of that serene beauty in silence.

Four o'clock struck. I seemed to wake with a shudder and see people crossing the road with upturned faces and palms. I knew the rain must be stopping—but my mind still went on, like the thunder now afar off:

"Why doesn't she look at me? Why doesn't she look at me?"

Above me I saw a yellow slit appear in the sky. I watched it break into great blue wounds among the clouds. Around me the shelterers were beginning to pass off and the thought of being alone on the edge of that shining pavement made me tremble as if I had been on the brink of a precipice. Suddenly the girl in the trap shut up her umbrella and shook her slightly wet hair and smiled at the sky. The sight made me pace up and down before the trap in an ecstasy of despair.

By doing so I caught sight of the name in white letters on the side and I began to repeat its monosyllable like a child at a task: "Dean, Dean, Dean."

I broke into a sweat again. It seemed as if my fingers were burning scars in the covers of my books. As if expecting them both to vanish from me I continued to watch the girl and repeat that name with the pitiful desperation that only youth can summon.

Then suddenly, to end it all, a woman came up and called "Thomasin" twice to the dreamy girl, then got into the trap and drove away. It was done in a moment. There seemed to be a flash of green and white, like the brief unfurling of a banner, then an emptiness in which I remember standing like a dull regretful fool, with a single thought, "It's all over. It's all over."

A glamorous week and a day went past. Staring up at the sky I lay dreaming away the hot Sunday afternoon in the shadow of a wood outside the village. Everywhere was silent. Only now and then the vast green temple behind me would give up the solitary song of some bird shy of the sunlight, or of another breaking out like an escaping prisoner into the bright air above. The may still splashed the hedges, as if with milk. Deceptively close and loud the cuckoos talked monotonously, only deepening the silence of a world that seemed to

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be sleeping under the benign dominion of the infinitely blue sky.

My thoughts were all of one thing. Sometimes when they reached a pitch of complete hopelessness or delight I turned and lay chest downwards to the warm earth. I believe I should have hated even the sun to see my face at those moments.

It wasn't that I was ashamed of that incredible passion brought about by an utter stranger, but that I was infinitely jealous about its secret preciousness. And that afternoon something in the spring air itself seemed to be watching me. I didn't feel alone. It was as if a spirit, aroused by some inner cry of my foolishly young heart, had crept out to torment me with all the quiet mysteriousness of its invisible presence.

Then, as I lay there trying to overcome by indifference my strange emotions, I became aware of another presence. A sound of feet, then a rustle of twigs was borne along to me. In a mood of wonderment I lay listening. Then a voice above me called my name.

I turned my astonished face to the glaring sky and blinked at the figure of a girl I saw there. Sitting up I recognized her as a girl named Martha, from the village. Behind her, giggling and nudging each other, were two of her friends, dressed like her, for Sunday. Angry at the intrusion I flung up into her face :

" What do you want ? "

Under the fierce reproach in the words she seemed to cower like a shy animal not comprehending a command. Her mouth looked as if about to burst into a torrent of weeping. Instead, she held out to me an envelope and asked in a faint voice :

" Would you give this to Julian Thorley ? "

I began to protest. " But—but why ? I shan't see him ! "

" It's Sunday. He always comes this way."

" Is it important ? "

One of the others broke in shrilly : " It's a love letter ! "

" Sssh. Oh ! "

The girl darted pitiful looks here and there like a guilty child. Gazing up into that sensitive face, scarlet in its extreme confusion, I could not refuse its naïve request. A week of the most agonizing abandonment to that other face hadn't hardened my heart, and I took the note with a promise. A minute later there was a sound of feet among the undergrowth in the wood and then the stillness of the hot, serene sky seemed to descend and suffocate me.

My alternate fits of gloom and ecstasy began again. The invisible spirit came out and renewed its dispassionate watch over me. Only now and then the naïve image of a girl holding a pair of endless reins seemed to rise and briefly annihilate it with its loveliness.

A sound of whistling disturbed me at last. Martha's note, already crumpled from lying beneath me, was taken out and given

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to Julian Thorley as he passed. He took it with a smile and went on. As he turned the bend of the path and disappeared behind the wood a little shower of white butterflies seemed to fly from him and settle forlornly in the grass.

After that there seems to have been an immense desert of solitude where the mirage of a pale face constantly arose and tantalized me into pursuit of it, and at the end of which I was thirsty and tired as if from sickness of body and mind. I walked home through the dusky wood as if in a dream. My footsteps made echoes that soared swiftly up to the green roof and ran among the leaves like spirits, mocking me.

Suddenly, on turning a bend in the path, I came upon Martha, the girl whose note I had delivered and already forgotten. Her lips lay parted in a sort of questioning smile which seemed to me utterly hopeless and pathetic. Her eyes were never still as she asked :

" Did you see him ? "

" Yes. I gave it to him."

She whispered, " Thank you."

She looked frightened in the silence which followed her words. Then she broke out :

" Did he read it ? "

" I think so."

" Did he say anything ? What did he say ? What did he do ? "

Her words seemed to confuse each other in their struggle for supremacy. I remained silent. Suddenly she burst out, womanishly, straight to the point :

" There's something you won't tell me ! "

I couldn't answer her. Then a repetition of the words seemed to strike my heart like a blow. I looked once again at that simple, piteous face waiting for me to blurt out a piece of information which I felt she hadn't the courage to endure without weeping. But no longer able to bear her repeated cry I told her with abrupt ingenuousness :

" He tore it up."

She started wildly. A few broken sounds escaped from her and fled up among the branches. Then there was no sound but that of the languid leaves and a bird or two among them. On her face a few tears glistened and dried. The lips opened in their old expectant way, but her eyes were sombre and dilated, as if she hadn't slept for weeks. I had to ask :

" Doesn't he care about you ? "

Her face wore an expression of wonder, then of miserable resignation. Then she whispered slowly :

" They say—in the village they say I haven't a chance against Thomasin Dean."

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In another moment I was conscious of a figure retreating among the trees. Then silence took her place. Until long after I stood gazing at the ground, crushing slowly and earnestly beneath my foot a piece of wood scarlet with ants, as if expecting to gain consolation from that deadly serious task.

The sun began to go down as I stood there. A few shadows assembled darkly like a picket ready for patrol. The birds fluttered noisily among the leaves. Suddenly I caught the sweet vanilla scent of may borne in from the hedges on a faint wind. I held up my head and at once all the sensations of all the springs of my life seemed to assail me as I breathed that unexpected fragrance. The next moment I saw, soberly and calmly, that for me the significance and magic of a woman's beauty must likewise lie in a single impression of a face beneath an umbrella in the gloom of a storm. It was like a revelation.

I remember throwing up my arms with a faint sigh as I resigned myself to this soothing thought. As I walked slowly from the wood I wasn't conscious of the faintest tremor of sadness or regret. Outside the evening was still and quiet, as if at a prayer. Faint and intoxicating the scent of may followed me over the darkening fields until my head was singing with joy.

Somewhere in the east, deceptively close and loud, a cuckoo called on and on, as if it were noon, and I laughed in return.

* * *

VITAL STATISTICS

If you are engaged in debate and find yourself up against one of those tiresome creatures with a weary wealth of figures, it is useful to remember Lord Simon's dictum that "there are liars, damned liars, and statisticians," a truth which can be illustrated by the case of the young wife of a Member of Parliament who met a bishop at an official reception.

The bishop, as bishops can, enquired after the lady's family, to which she replied, "I am glad to say we have only four."

His lordship demanded to know why "only" four and why "glad" about it, whereupon the young lady explained, "My husband and I have been studying statistics, and we find every fifth child born into the world is a Chinese."

SIR ERNEST BENN, *Happier Days*

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SON OF BIG NATHAN

"Even from Botany Bay I shall come to thank you," he said, "and bad luck, Liltie"

by JIM PHELAN

BOSSWELL the townspeople call me, but the Romany folk always pronounce it the other way, like the name of the good man who was my great-great-uncle, the son of Big Nathan. His is the story the Romany mothers tell at night, to keep the *chavos* quiet, saying that Boney Bosivel will get them.

It started when Liltie Hearn left the road, over a hundred years ago, back before the battle of Waterloo. Yellow Liltie Hearn, the only Romany man who ever betrayed his people and his race and his blood, Liltie started the story.

Hearn left the road, and became rich, and forgot his own people. He hated his own folk, and drove one of the best of the Romany to hunger and slavery and death, in Van Diemen's Land. For the price of one horse and a tent he did it, back in the time when they were fighting in the war at Waterloo.

Long before then, Liltie had pulled in his waggon on a little patch of common land that no one cared about, by Woodbridge near Ipswich in Suffolk. For the first year he lived in his waggon, and made no show of wanting anything from anyone, but had a patch of garden with a little fence round it, all the most natural thing in the world.

So it went on from year to year, with Liltie's fence spreading fast and far, until in the end he had a big house, and a fence round enough land to make him rich without anything else. But there was plenty else, because Liltie made money fast. Crooked or straight he made it.

Then one day, suddenly, he cut loose and had no more to do with his own people, and denied them, and hated them.

Up to then, in the ordinary way, if a Romany tribe came the road north out of Ipswich they would halt by Woodbridge. And at such a time they would go over to swop gossip and news with Liltie Hearn. Then if they wanted anything they asked for it, and if Liltie wanted anything they gave it, in the ordinary run of the road.

But when Liltie had enough money, quite suddenly and with no warning he cut adrift. The first thing anyone knew was that one

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night a long line of Romany waggons halted, and Liltie's men with the constables swept in and fought them out of it.

Go they must, that night, when they got over their surprise, because Liltie was for handing them over, to be transported to Van Diemen's Land, as was done with travelling people in those days. They went, and no Romany waggon ever pulled in there again.

So Liltie prospered, and was rid of the thought that he came from the road—except maybe at night when he would be afraid of what he had done. There was a big war in Europe at the time, in the days before the battle of Waterloo, and Liltie made money fast, selling horses to the government for the soldiers, or buying the metal to make the guns.

Now it came on that Waterloo was fought, and the English won, and the war was over. Then in the peace after that war there were bad times on the road. Because the roads were full thick with men who had been in the soldiers and had nowhere to go.

Terrible laws were passed against them, naming them for sturdy vagrants, and giving them the style of rogues and vagabonds, and a man could be transported for life if he was a starving ex-soldier and stole four copper coins or a loaf. It was always like that after a big war. In those days.

Now Liltie was sitting at home one night when his flunkeyman said there was a man named Bosivel had called. So Liltie had him in, he not having seen even one man from the road, at close quarters, for many a year.

The Bosivel boy came in, a boy who had been away for years, in the navy-ships where he was put by the press-gang, and in the soldiers after that, and at the battle of Waterloo. So he knew nothing, not one word, of what Liltie had turned out in the years between, but expected to find friendship and help from Hearn, such as any Romany would give at need. He came in, and made a road-sign, and gave Liltie good luck in Romany.

"Reuben Bosivel," he says all cheerfully. "The son of Big Nathan. And good luck Liltie—long years I see none of our people, for I have been to the French war." He stood and smiled and waited for his welcome.

Sad man. Sad man. Waiting for a welcome from Yellow Liltie Hearn!

"What d'you want?" demanded Liltie, gruff and fierce as any constable, and the Bosivel boy stared.

"From the trooper-ship below Ipswich I come," he explained, "and I must get to my people, by Lincoln. The roads are full thick with broken soldiers, and the constables will jail me tomorrow, before I make Woodbridge even, if I have to beg my way."

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"What d'you want?" snarled Liltie again.

"A horse if you have one," says the Bosivel boy. "And a tent if you have one. And a pair of pistols to make my road safe to Lincoln. With a trifle of hard money if such you can spare. Then all will be well, and next time our waggons pull in here the Bosivels will square for all, and good luck Liltie."

"Get on your road," says Hearn. "We want no thieving jippoes here. Get on your road."

"Am I telling you," says Reuben Bosivel, "that on the road I shall not stay free six hours. It means Botany Bay if I so much as snare one rabbit for my supper." And he stared again, for he could still not believe his own ears, since never up to then had anyone heard of a Romany man turning against his own.

"So be it for Botany Bay," says Yellow Liltie. "So be it and get out." Reuben Bosivel turned away.

"So be it, if it must," he said quietly. "Now I go the road into Woodbridge. But Liltie," he put in, more quietly still, "even from Botany Bay I shall come to thank you. Even if I die there, yellow one. They call me Bonaparte Bosswell in the soldiers, because I stick my word. Boney Bosivel, and I shall stick my word for you, whether I stand or fall tomorrow. Whether I stand or fall, and bad luck Liltie, and remember."

He walked out, and within five miles of the house the constables had him, for a snared pheasant and a stolen loaf of bread. Maybe Liltie breathed good relief in a few weeks when he heard the news. For to Botany Bay the boy went sure enough.

There is no way of knowing what went on in Liltie Hearn's mind in the years that came. But in outside things he went prospering fast. A rich man he was, coming fifty, when he heard the good news that a convict called Boney Bosivel had died far away over the sea.

So Liltie sat back and looked round to make more money, and throve and throve again. Until one night, when he was riding late through his estate, which was bigger than ever by then, a dark figure stepped out of a wood. Thin and ghastly he looked, only a skeleton, with a bony face that gave the cold-blood to Liltie Hearn, but he made no hostile move.

"Boney Bosivel," he said cheerfully. "The son of Big Nathan. And good luck Liltie—long years I see none of our people."

"Keep back," shouted Liltie Hearn. "Keep back. Boney Bosivel is dead, in Van Diemen's Land."

"Dead indeed," agreed the tall figure. "Dead I be, and come to remind you. Did not I promise to thank you, and they call me Boney Bosivel because I stick my word." He moved a few inches closer to Liltie's horse.

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Screaming for help, and fumbling for his pistols at the same time, Hearn nearly choked with fear. Then he drew breath again as the horse dashed away, and the thin man made no move to follow him.

Next day Liltie lay close, terrified, but presently he forgot. Then before long he could believe, or nearly believe, he had made the story himself, out of a troubled mind. In three weeks he was himself again.

Then one night the skeleton-like man looked in at Liltie's bedroom window.

"Boney Bosivel," he said in a cheerful voice. "The son of Big Nathan. Come to thank you, Liltie. You'll remember my promise."

Yellow Liltie Hearn nearly choked there and then. But when he screamed for help, and the servants came, there was no one at the window or near it. For three days Liltie refused to stir out of his bedroom, lying in bed with two pistols beside him, and shivering day and night.

But a business man has business, and after a week Hearn was out and around again. There was no sign from Boney. But Liltie began to go thin, and did not sleep, and often he screamed when he thought he saw the thin dark man who was not there at all. Then gradually he calmed, and was making to be quite healthy again, when the tall one popped out on him one night from the side of the road by Woodbridge.

"Boney Bosivel," he said cheerfully as ever. "To give you thanks, as was my promise. Boney Bosivel, and I stick my word forever."

Liltie Hearn did not hear the last word, for he was down on the road in an apoplexy, and was a sick man for a month.

Long before the month was over, and before Liltie was properly well again, he had a shock of another kind. For one day he tottered around his estate for exercise, and over on the common he saw a ring of waggons and tents, the ash-frame tents, whose shape he knew of long time, the camp of the Bosivels.

He rallied after a minute, for a man who will steal half of a common, and mass up thousands, and swear his own kin away, must have courage of a kind. He rallied, and with his armed serving-men around him he strode over to the Bosivels' camp.

No peace-sign was made to him as he walked in among the tents and waggons, and no word was spoken until he fronted a group by one of the fires. Big Nathan Bosivel was there, the father of Reuben that was dead, and Simon Bosivel the dead boy's brother, and Rachel Bosivel his mother. They stood in silence and waited and waited to hear Liltie Hearn.

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" Call off your curs," he shouted roughly. " Call off your curs and corpses, for dead or alive I'm afraid of no Bosivel. Call him off I tell you," he repeated, " or it'll be worse for you."

The family looked at him in silence, and from each one he got the same cold smile.

" Easy seen," said Big Nathan at last, " that you are not afraid. Since you order us, the living, to speak for you with the dead." He smiled, and the mother smiled, and Simon Bosivel smiled beside them, while Liltie Hearn gradually paled, and lost his bluster.

" If Boney Bosivel comes near me again," he said at last, " then the soldiers from Ipswich will blow every Bosivel here into bits off this common. I can do it," he roared, " as you well know, and I *will* do it."

" And that," said Big Nathan quietly, " will stop Boney Bosivel from sticking his word ? Ah, no, Liltie, not a Bosivel. How long," he asked pleasantly, " how long did my son say he would come to thank you ? "

" Forever, he said," put in Simon Bosivel. " And forever it will be, if I know my dead brother. He sticks his word."

Then Hearn's nerve gave out, and his voice went quavering, and he begged with the old mother that he had meant no harm. He begged with her, because of course he had the dark-fear inside him still, being a waggon-man at heart.

" Can I go," she asked him, " to Van Dieman's Land and whisper into his grave ? Should I put between a dead man and his word ? If Reuben said forever, it is forever."

Liltie made a peace-sign as he left, but no one responded, and he spoke fair words, but the Bosivels only smiled.

Then when he was back on his own estate Liltie turned brave again, and swore he would bring soldiers with a grapeshot gun, and blow the rest of the Bosivels to hell with Boney, for he did not fear them dead or alive.

But that was by daylight, and in the midst of his armed men. Still he meant to do it, and made haste to his house, to send a messenger riding for Ipswich, when a carriage came driving to the door and a lady got out.

This was the daughter of the high lord of Woodbridge, one with whom Liltie was hoping to wed. Fifty he was, but the wealthiest man for miles, so he could lay claim to the hand of the great lady, a warm-hearted beauty sold him by her father it was said, when by rights she would marry with a young man like herself. From his upstairs window Liltie saw her come from her carriage, and went down the stairs to meet her.

He saw her pass through the hall, following a servant to the drawing-room, and hurried down to speak of marriage, forgetting

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his errand to have the Bosivels destroyed. He opened the door, and saw the tip of her shoe where she sat in a long chair by the fireside.

Then she stood up, and it was not the high lord's daughter, but a tall man, chalk-white and cold.

"Boney Bosivel," he said in the same cheerful voice. "To thank you and keep my word. Forever."

Liltie Hearn went down as if he had been pole-axed. When he came round there was no one in the room, and he squealed like a hare in a trap until the serving men came.

He squealed still, with his armed men round him, while a messenger fetched a lawyer out of Woodbridge. And when the lawyer came Liltie made his will, leaving every penny he owned, and every acre he owned, to the Bosivel tribe forever. Then and then only he slept.

Next day he felt happier than he had ever felt since the first night he saw Boney Bosivel, and he walked that afternoon to the Bosivel camp, to tell his news and make his peace. They received him well, and all was friendship again, and even the old mother gave her say that it was a noble thing to do, making up for the wrong.

So Liltie whistled for the first time in years, as he crossed back into his estate.

His money was gone, but he did not mind, for his peace was made and that was better than money. By a high rock-bank he stood smiling, as he glanced back at the Bosivel camp, and at his elbow someone spoke from the trees.

"Boney Bosivel," said the thin dark man. "The son of Big Nathan. I stick my word. Forever."

Liltie Hearn went over the rock-bank and was picked up with a broken neck.

That is the story the Romany mothers tell, to keep the *chavos* quiet. All Liltie's houses and lands came into the Bosivel family, and the first thing they did was to flatten Liltie's home, until no single stone was over another stone anywhere.

To this day there is nothing there, neither growing nor standing. Where the road comes by the place of Liltie's former home, there is a grave by the roadside, an empty grave for the man who died in Van Diemen's Land. To this day fresh flowers go on it, and the country people will tell you that "wandering gipsies", as they say, come far to lay them there.

In summer when the waggons pass the way, each one is pulled aside for a moment, by the rock-bank where Liltie Hearn went over, and the men go and stand on his grave and curse his name. Then someone will tell the story of Boney Bosivel, the son of Big Nathan.

But the way some tell it, all was done by young Simon, the dead

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man's brother. Partly with the help of the lord's daughter, who like many another high-born lady was in love with a Romany boy.

They say Simon frightened Liltie into giving away everything he owned to the Bosivels. Then frightened him at last until he fell over the bank.

And if he did—good luck to him.

Then others will tell that when Simon had Liltie scared, and all his lands were signed away, he got at Liltie before he had time to change his mind, and pushed him over the bank to make sure.

And if he did—good luck to him.

* * *

ACCOUNT CLOSED

A friend of mine, an orthopædic surgeon with a mathematical bent, came to me in a state of great joy one day during the war . . . He had just been promoted major, and this ennoblement, with the appropriate pay and allowances, was labelled " w.e.f. November 1, 1043."

He had already drafted a letter to the paymaster. It was dated November, 1943, and was a little plaintive. Payment as a captain, R.A.M.C., for the last three years was freely admitted. Payment for the last 999 years since the gazetting of his majority had not been received. There followed some higher mathematics which I could not follow, but the total of back pay owing to this gallant officer was something like £603,489 3s. 9d.

The sequel came some weeks later. The paymaster was delighted to trace at last the only surviving officer of a number of famous campaigns. In all of these there had been some loss of medical stores which could be properly charged up at last. There were a couple of stretchers, rude, improvised, missing since Dunsinane in 1056. Rather more equipment had been lost when Harold defeated Tostig and all that. A complete mule-train laden with salves and cauterizing irons had gone adrift during the Crusades. There had been similar losses at Crecy, Monmouth, Agincourt, and St. Albans. At the latter engagement in 1455 one of the more expensive missing items was oil of red and white roses.

It was a lovely list full of resounding names, and what with one complete hospital ship and a score of 1914–1918 ambulances it all added up to £603,489 3s. 3d. A superb cheque for sixpence was therefore enclosed in full settlement.

HARVEY GRAHAM, *A Doctor's London*

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A SWEET DISORDER

Let thy attyre be comely, but not costly

JOHN LYLY

Lady Mary Wortley is arrived; I have seen her; I think her avarice, her dirt, and her vivacity are all increased. Her dress, like her language, is a galimatias of several countries; the groundwork rags, and the embroidery nastiness. She needs no cap, no handkerchief, no gown, no petticoat, no shoes. An old blacklaced hood represents the first; the fur of a horseman's coat, which replaces the third, serves for the second; a dimity petticoat is deputy, and officiates for the fourth, and slippers act the part of the last.

HORACE WALPOLE *to* GEORGE MONTAGU,
in a letter, 2nd February, 1762

Déshabillé

Lined coat, warm cap and easy felt slippers,
In the little tower, at the low window, sitting over the sunken brazier.
Body at rest, heart at peace; no need to rise early.
I wonder if the courtiers at the Western Capital know of these things, or not?

PO CHÜ-I, 772–846, *translated by* ARTHUR WALEY

Accessories

Cousin Honoria subscribed to the *Gentlewoman's Gazette* and *The Young Englishwoman*, and would herself copy their latest millinery with considerable skill, but invariably in *brown paper*! Her paper hats she would sometimes trim in an orthodox manner with satin bows, with flowers, scraps of priceless old lace, with paradise plumes or humming birds or ostrich feathers, but at other times she would use, as might Mme. Dali, any object which came to hand and which caught her fancy, such as pieces of moss or lichen, sprays of old-man's beard, or arbutus berries which would fall off their stems with a plop during the sermon; or the brightly coloured shell of a smallish crab which brought the flies buzzing round her; and on one occasion even a dead bird which she had picked up in the woods and which brought more than flies in its train . . .

When she tired of her animal, vegetable or mineral millinery, she would go to a drawer in her wardrobe where she kept folded away all last year's paper hats from the family crackers, and would sally forth to Matins, ivory-backed prayer book in hand, and

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usually clad in an immense purple or black moiré crinoline, even as late as the end of the 'seventies, when this elegant garment had been out of date for a decade—a dress which was, in itself, sobriety personified, but which, when crowned with an emerald-green dunce's cap or a puce-coloured Admiral's hat decorated with gold paper lace, assumed a curiously raffish and disreputable appearance. At Christmas time she would bargain ferociously either with some member of the family or with one of the servants who had drawn a cracker creation in which she fancied herself; in a firm voice she would address the kitchen maid or the third housemaid:

"Mary Ann, that cap will look better on *me* than on you."

And then, taking twopence from her reticule, she would give it to the maid, as the latter handed over the coveted frippery, with a quite serious little homily.

"It does not become *any* of us to dress *above* our station."

WILLIAM D'ARFEY

The Glass of Fashion . . .

Bustopher Jones is not skin and bones—
In fact, he's remarkably fat.
He doesn't haunt pubs—he has eight or nine clubs,
For he's the St. James's Street Cat!
He's the Cat we all greet as he walks down the street
In his coat of fastidious black:
No commonplace mousers have such well-cut trousers
Or such an impeccable back.
In the whole of St. James's the smartest of names is
The name of this Brummell of Cats;
And we're all of us proud to be nodded or bowed to
By Bustopher Jones in white spats!

T. S. ELIOT, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*

Transparencies

She has been giving me an account of a new dress called transparencies. Pray, have you heard of it? It is an entire suit of the finest gold and azure brocade that can be seen, over which is a black robe, either of beautiful English lace, or velvet chenille like the winter laces you have seen: this occasions the name of transparency, which is, you see, a black suit, and a suit of gold and azure, or any other colour, according to the fancy of the wearer, and is all the fashion at present.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, *in a letter to her daughter*, 1676

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Feather-Folly

And here come these beaux, and their feather-witted, feather-crowned ladies who are their complements, driving round and round the Park, as if they were leaves, or feathers, blown by a cold wind. " Our emaciated beaux in these quilted lapels and stuffed sleeves," said *The Times*, " are like a dry walnut in a great shell " ; whilst as to the ladies, the same commentator observes : " The maroon fever has been succeeded by a very odd kind of light-headedness which the physicians call the pteriomania, or feather-folly . . . The Ladies now wear feathers exactly of their own length, so that a woman is twice as long upon her feet as in her bed . . . A young lady, only ten feet high, was overset in one of the late gales of wind, in Portland Place, and the upper mast of her feathers blown upon Hampstead Hill " . . . The rest of the attire was lighter than the feathers' and " owing to the fashion of wearing muslin " we are told by another paper, " eighteen ladies caught fire, and another eighteen thousand caught cold."

EDITH SITWELL, *The English Eccentrics*

Dinner Dress

By way of a hat he'd a loaf of Brown Bread,
In the middle of which he inserted his head ;—
His Shirt was made up of no end of dead Mice,
The warmth of whose skins was quite fluffy and nice ;—
His Drawers were of Rabbit-skins ;—so were his Shoes ;—
His Stockings were skins,—but it is not known whose ;—
His Waistcoat and Trowsers were made of Pork Chops ;—
His Buttons were Jujubes, and Chocolate Drops ;—
His Coat was all Pancakes with Jam for a border,
And a Girdle of Biscuits to keep it in order ;
And he wore over all, as a screen from bad weather,
A Cloak of green Cabbage-leaves stitched all together.

EDWARD LEAR, *Nonsense Songs*

Cast-Offs

If you have an old spare cast-off morning gowne, peruiques, and some like cast-off large cloake-coate, which things you could spare without the least inconveniency to you, if you woold spare them to your afflicted servant they woold be very welcome and with milions of thanks ; and to have a bundle made upp and by a porter to have it privately left for me at Trinity House, Water Lane, at Mr. Hunter's.

BALTHAZAR ST. MICHEL *to* SAMUEL PEPYS *in a letter*, 1691

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DELIGHTED SALAMANDER

She alone knew the deepest ecstasy of the dance

by JOHN INGLIS HALL

IT was the morning upon which La Belle Victoria cleaned the whole of Sancia's studio. She even cleaned the completed statues, dusting, with something far too near a caress for strict decency, those parts of them which a prude might have preferred her to neglect. For the human body was La Belle Victoria's delight, and she was an extremely naughty girl, as well as a perfect servant.

It was also the day upon which Sancia had arranged for us to fly with her over the Atlas to stay with Yves Morvan at the desert fort of El Guérmine, to model a famous dancing girl, Zora.

I had risen late, and sat downstairs on the back of an armchair, a dry island on the wet floor of the studio, watching La Belle Victoria as she pattered about barefoot in her baggy trousers, her draped white dress tucked up under her armpits, singing a little, silly tinkling Arab song. As she sang and worked, she laughed at me in a certain manner, with her eyes as well as her lips, and I knew that the song was probably coarse, if not obscene. All at once she stopped.

"Yes," she said, "you are right, *monsieur*. It is the working song of the girls of Marrakesh. It is a wicked, wicked song!"

She spoke with delight, not as one viciously loving iniquity, but as one to whom the sweets of wickedness were a joyful reality.

"What is the story of the song?" I asked, laughing.

La Belle Victoria shook her head.

"There is none," she said simply. "It describes action, *monsieur le docteur*! I have taught it to Madame Sancia, and sometimes, when we are sad, we sing it together. We once sang it to a man who was delivering vegetables. He went and fetched some other men from the Souk, then we all sang it together in the yard—to a policeman."

She sighed with satisfaction.

"It was beautiful," she said. "Such a wicked, wicked song!"

La Belle Victoria had stopped working now and was thinking. She always managed, consciously or unconsciously, to stand in a plastic, elegant pose. It was something to do with Sancia's demands

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on her as a model. This time she stood relaxed, with her hands on the back of a chair, eyelids lowered, her great black lashes almost flush with her cheeks. She looked up at last and smiled happily.

"Ah-h-h, *docteur*," she said. "What a pleasure to return to the South! To see Monsieur Morvan again—and to see Zora dance!"

Victoria pushed the chair away from her. Exquisitely, rhythmically, she put one foot forward, turned her torso away from the direction of her feet and began to move her hands and fingers with a sensuous delicacy, her face radiant with a secret smile. For a second, her soul seemed to flutter at her finger-tips, then she stopped.

"You see, I can dance too, *monsieur*! I was trained to dance from seven years old. But near Zora of El Guérmine I must not dance—ever!"

She shook her head, but not ruefully. La Belle Victoria was singularly content to be La Belle Victoria, a power in her small world. Her brilliance lay in taking her fair hour. She did not envy the talents of others, but basked in their sun, a delighted salamander.

That afternoon we flew over the Atlas from Casablanca to Agadir, on the first leg of our journey to El Guérmine. La Belle Victoria came from the South. She had attached herself to Sancia during one of the latter's voyages up the Sus valley from Agadir, in the small, red-walled town of Tarudant where she had been a child dancer.

Sancia had modelled there the sketches for a great bas-relief of Arab women, to ornament the inner courtyard of a banker's mansion at Anfa. In addition to her sketches, Sancia had brought back with her to Casablanca La Belle Victoria, aged thirteen, who had sat at her feet, gazelle-eyed, adoring, or danced for her with infinite grace, sensuality and humour, for hours at a time. Sancia had formed her, and from a little trained wanton she had become an enchanting woman of eighteen, her character a fine balance between Arab and European.

Sancia and I sat together in the aircraft, a highly excited Victoria on the seat behind us. We looked down on to the broad green and terracotta coastal plain with the far sea to the right of us, a white ruffle of surf licking the long beaches. There were the little, white-walled towns, clinging precariously to the shore, as though sea and land were simultaneously threatening to swallow them up. We passed them—Mazagan, Safi and Mogador—and came at last to the Atlas, climbing all the while.

Far above the round, whirled, lunar hills and red ridges, pock-marked with scrub, cut by deep, deserted valleys, some of them containing veins of dark green palms, we sat in the cool security of the aircraft cabin, and watched our winged shadow creep over the

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barren hills. Far to the East, towards Marrakesh, the peaks of the High Atlas, snow-covered, loomed in the violet afternoon haze.

Sancia slipped her hand into mine and spoke, drawing my mind back into the trivial world of human activity.

" Jean, you will be careful while we are with Morvan ? " she said. " He is not long married and his wife is with him. I am told that she is very jealous."

" Sancia," I replied, " you must tell me what you want me to do. Obviously, I shan't make love to his wife, but I don't suppose that is what you mean."

She looked at me with clear blue eyes, without giving a hint of what she was thinking.

" You had better be very, very attentive to me," she said at last.

" I find that easy ! " I replied.

It was part of Sancia's convention never to explain her actions, never wholly to give herself, no matter how close her relationship with anyone. Neither of us entirely yielded when we were together. There was always something within us both which remained wholly out of reach of the other, and it was a bond where it might have been a barrier.

" She will be very watchful, obviously," said Sancia thoughtfully. " After all, Morvan has a certain reputation."

" I wonder she allowed him to invite you," I said. " In any case, is the excuse for our journey, this Zora of El Guérmine, a better dancer than the other Zoras at the other oases ? "

" Jean, I like you when you follow my secret thoughts," said Sancia, laughing and kissing me on the cheek. " As to Zora, I think we can trust Morvan. He has immense knowledge of his subject ! Also, Victoria knew her. Zora was at Tarudant when she was a child. Ask her."

" She has already told me," I said.

From behind us, Victoria leaned forward and spoke : " *Monsieur le docteur*, to speak of other Zoras beside Zora of El Guérmine is foolishness. It is like comparing Madame Sancia with the workman who shapes a stone for a building. When this Zora dances, it is as though she suffered pain, as though she must dance because of a demon in her. Nobody moves except the drummers and the singers. People stare and stare, and at the end, leave silently."

She nodded her head, as though she were approving a clear picture in her mind : " You will see."

There was a long silence between us. The aircraft was crossing the high spurs of the Atlas, a few miles from the sea. At last it was over and sank slowly towards the broad bay of Agadir, passing the Pasha's rugged fort, high on its pointed hill, the Medina and the white, untidy French town with its alternating modern buildings and

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desolate open spaces, the curved, sandy beach, with the long rollers running in from the Atlantic.

Soon we were down, out of the coolness of the upper air, stifling in the weighted, breathless heat and dust of the aerodrome. As we stepped out, leaving Victoria with the steward to protect our luggage, Sancia raised her arm and waved it, as though she were stirring the air to make a breeze.

"If it's like this at Agadir," she said, "Lord knows what it'll be like at El Guérmine. But I don't mind the heat. My blood flows hotter, that's all!"

I did not ask her when she had last been at El Guérmine. When Sancia praised me, it was most often for minding my own business. Half an hour later, Morvan's private communications aircraft landed and picked up the three of us, and our luggage. By six o'clock, we were circling El Guérmine and its small landing strip, which lies in the centre of a flat, red plain, between two desolate, saw-toothed ranges of hills. Out from the gate of Morvan's fort, to the south, sped a small car. We watched, fascinated, as it scurried towards the hut at the end of the landing strip nearest the village, like a little, dust-raising beetle.

As we landed, the aircraft bumped along the unmetalled, sandy surface and finally came to a halt beside the car. Our engines stopped and the noisy world lapsed into absolute silence. Everything shook and shimmered in the desert heat. Away to the right, a mirage of green gardens and pools of blue water beckoned to us falsely as though we were lost travellers. Morvan, immaculate in white Arab trousers, tunic and blue Képi, stepped out of the car and walked over to us, saluting. He was alone.

Sancia greeted him affectionately and he kissed her hand.

"And your wife?" she asked.

I thought I detected a shadow of irritation in his voice as he replied, shortly: "She did not want to come. She hates the heat."

"Then she must hate El Guérmine," said Sancia.

"She does." He sighed.

"Poor girl," he added, and shook my hand as Sancia introduced us.

"*Enchanté, docteur*," he said. "Welcome to my home—to my only love!"

He made a wide gesture with his whole arm, all round the parched horizon, and smiled. All the time, La Belle Victoria had been standing behind us, watching and waiting for a word from Morvan, like a beggar waiting for alms. At last he turned to her.

"*Tiens!* La Belle Victoria!" he exclaimed, looking her straight in the eyes, approvingly. "As beautiful as ever! And is she still as wise?"

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He took her hand and as he held it, turned to Sancia questioningly. She nodded her head.

"Wiser," she said. "She rules me, and I never feel like one who has submitted."

"Who would not become wise in Madame's house?" said Victoria, closing the subject with a deft phrase.

We drove slowly over the sand towards the fort of El Guérmine, pursued by a cloud of fine dust. Sancia, in the front seat, talked quietly with Morvan. The engine of the car was noisy and old, and I could not hear clearly what they said, though twice I heard Morvan pronounce the word "*difficile*," and felt sure that he was speaking of his wife. As for Victoria, she glanced at me occasionally out of the corner of her eye, and watched Morvan and Sancia in front of us with an enigmatic smile.

The fort of El Guérmine is square, pink, crenellated, with a low tower at each corner and one above the door. As we drove in, a superb sentry sprang to attention and presented arms.

Inside, we drew up in front of Morvan's quarters, and two magnificent Arab servants, dressed in dazzling white, came running out and opened the doors of the car for us. Victoria watched them critically from over the top of her veil, which she had adjusted as they appeared; then, when they had picked up our luggage, followed them in with a light, bold step. She walked beautifully always, but following the two men, who were handsome and tall, to every movement she made she managed to add something more. She did not sway at the hips or beckon with her hands, but before they had reached the top of the steps, both men had glanced back at her. Victoria looked down modestly and walked on, dainty as a gazelle.

Nobody met us in the hall, which was cool. But as we climbed the steps from the hot courthouse, I had looked up to a window above the door, and seen for a second a dark-haired girl with a pale face looking down at us, curiously. I expected her to appear and greet us after a few minutes, possibly with some formal apology connected with the sun, but she did not. Nor did we meet her at dinner. At a quarter to eight, Morvan came quickly down the stairs into the hall. He looked angry.

"Élise can't be with us tonight," he said apologetically. "I'm very sorry, but she asks to be excused. She suffers terribly from migraine in the heat. She asks you to do the honours, Sancia."

Sancia looked curiously at Morvan from the low couch where she was sitting, then gave me her hands so that I could pull her to her feet.

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"Ah, Yves," she said. "I'm so sorry. Shall I go to her? Is there anything I can do?"

Morvan shook his head.

"Nothing," he said. "She would hate you to worry."

He took Sancia by the arm and led her in to dinner. It was a delightful meal, perfectly served by the two Arabs. The wide champagne glasses sweated in the heat as they were filled and refilled. Morvan was a shrewd talker and had a pretty wit.

It was not until dinner was over that the evening began to spoil—when Morvan began to talk about Zora. We were drinking coffee. Outside in the central courtyard of the fort, suddenly the red, flickering flames of torches blazed. They lit up the walls of the room in which we were sitting, and subdued the pale light of the moon which was on the wane.

"Ah, it is beginning," said Morvan eagerly.

At that moment drums began to beat, very softly at first, on an even note. Then, as they grew louder, the sound started to rise and fall monotonously, but with a life of its own, apart from the hands of the drummers. Morvan got up and walked nervously towards the big window overlooking the courtyard.

"You'll need your paper and charcoal soon, Sancia," he said. "The first scene is good, too. Shall I go up and get it?"

"No, I'll go," replied Sancia, joining him at the window and looking out, standing rather close to him. She spoke quickly, as though her nerves, too, were on edge. "When will they bring her?"

"In about half an hour."

"Half an hour of drumming? But you told me that Élise hates it. Why do it?"

"She hates Zora, too," said Morvan.

Sancia looked at him for a moment, and I knew that she was angry. Suddenly there was much more than drumming in the air. She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"I'll go and get my things," she said.

I opened the door for her, but she hardly looked at me as she went out.

Morvan called me to the window. Outside, a dozen torches, fixed on the ends of tall stakes, blazed and crackled. They were set in a circle, about four yards between each. Beside them, their black shadows dancing on the beaten sand, sat a white-clad line of about a dozen drummers, squatting on their haunches. We were slightly above them, the residence being built on a narrow terrace. The men wore the white, halo-like *chechia* on their round, black heads and drummed—on one side of the drum with hand and wrist, on the other with fingers alone. Their faces were absorbed, intent. The

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whole scene filled me with excitement—a profound, delightful disquiet.

"You've never seen this before?" queried Morvan.

I shook my head.

"Then I'm glad that you should begin with Zora," he said. "I never saw a dancer like her in my life. And I have known many."

He changed the subject.

"I'm afraid it was a big mistake to invite Sancia down here again," he said suddenly. "I'm sorry. I wish I hadn't done it, but it's too late now."

Outside, the beat of the drums was growing louder.

"Why?" I began stupidly.

He was about to reply when La Belle Victoria entered, opening the door very softly. She was unveiled and smiling.

"*Sidi Capitaine*," she said. "Madame Sancia has come down. She is on the terrace, waiting for you."

As we left the room and walked through the hall to the door which led on to the terrace, Victoria signalled to me urgently, and I kept close to her while Morvan went over to where Sancia was standing, holding a large sketching pad in front of her. She was drawing quickly, with great, sweeping lines, impressions of the scene below her. Keeping behind her, Victoria whispered to me.

"*Docteur*," she pleaded. "*Du calme!*"

"But Victoria, I am calm! What is it?"

"There are too many jealous people in the house! First, Madame Morvan—and now, the impossible! Madame Sancia!"

I seized her by the arm.

"Madame Sancia?" I queried. "But of whom, Victoria, of whom?"

"Zora!" she said. "Ah, I knew Madame Sancia once loved Monsieur Morvan, *docteur*! But I thought it was finished—quite finished!"

She left me to put a table beside Sancia, on which she could pile her used sheets of paper. I walked unsteadily to the balustrade of the terrace, and joined in the general madness by a sudden, inward gust of anger, not against Sancia, but against Morvan. The dance which followed may have remained in my mind, vividly, precisely as I saw it unfold, because of the unique, ridiculous circle of jealousy in which it was set like a stone.

Another line of drummers had taken their places behind the first. The din grew louder and as I listened to the note of the drums, rising, falling, rising, falling, my anger was somehow sustained by it, yet rendered more bearable. A group of about ten men approached across the sandy courtyard, dressed in white. They sat down in a

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ring, side by side, legs crossed, within the circle of torches, their knees almost touching.

Over her shoulder, I watched Sancia sketching furiously, swiftly, taking no notice of anyone. It was as though she was running away from her emotions in a paroxysm of action. The moon had waned and the torchlight made moving shadows on her paper, so that the figures she drew also seemed to move. Victoria stood behind us watching, and as Sancia tore the sheets of paper from the block one by one, she placed them on the table with a weight on them.

A man from the circle sprang to his feet and, in a loud, quavering voice which rose high above the beat of the drums, sang a verse of a wild song, ending with an almost animal cry, "Zora!" then sat down. By now I could see that several of the drummers were bleeding from the hands and wrists. The drumming rose and fell in rolling waves of sound, sometimes delicate and soft, sometimes loud and hollow. Suddenly, it changed to a level, whispered, voluminous tattoo, which lasted for a whole minute. Morvan placed a hand on Sancia's shoulder.

"Look!" he exclaimed, pointing with his other hand.

From a far corner of the courtyard, proceeding dimly out of the darkness, came four men, walking slowly, carrying on their shoulders two beams, crossed in the middle between them. In the centre of the cross, at the point of juncture, sat an indeterminate, shapeless yet pyramidal mass, entirely draped in a long, black cloth.

"They're bringing her!"

Sancia shook his hand from her shoulder roughly and went on drawing.

Behind the four men, in a disorderly, shoving, ragged procession, came a stream of spectators from the Medina. Many of the men were carrying drums. They settled down on the edge of the radius of light from the torches, and soon their drumming swelled the rhythm already in the air. With their black-covered burden, the four men walked steadily towards the circle of light and the ring of men within it. When they reached it, they turned inwards and lifted it high above the heads of the sitting men, then lowered it until it was on the ground in the centre of the ring, with the cross beneath it.

Two of the men stood up, and the other two withdrew the cross from under it and left the dark figure, sitting upright and alone. A radius of a yard and a half separated it from the men. For a minute they sat tense and still while the drummers went mad, rolling their great thunderclaps out and up and down. They swayed their bodies about as they drummed, and uttered loud, fierce, wailing cries.

The heat of the night was all round us like a weight, under a clear sky trembling with stars. Outside the range of the torchlight, the

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darkness enclosed the scene like a wall. Morvan stood motionless, staring at the black object in the centre of the circle. Sancia had stopped drawing, and leant on the balustrade in front of her. The drums grew quieter and I began to notice in their sound not so much a rolling and a rising and a falling, but a curious rhythm, like a tune without music.

As I watched the scene unfold, I grew quieter. The spectacle seemed to gain the upper hand over my anger. I took an occasional sidelong glance at the face of Victoria beside me. It shone with the very ecstasy of pleasure.

Gradually, the figure under the cloth began to move—convulsive twitchings like something trying to escape. The drumming swelled again and became faster, yet though its movement followed the rhythm of the drums, it was not hurried.

The first part of Zora which emerged from under the cloth was a dark brown hand, which shone with sweat under the torchlight. At that second, with a crash, the drums stopped and there was a hush, followed by a vibrating, high-pitched cry from the crowd. It proceeded from the centre of the circle where she sat, out to the perimeter of the crowd, to the throat of the last spectator. Seconds later, I realized that my voice, too, had been part of that cry. Only Morvan was silent, remaining with his eyes fixed on the circle. Sancia had turned towards him now and was watching him.

The drums began again, quietly, very quietly, while the single free hand which had fought its way out to the air from under the stifling hood of cloth moved rhythmically, in time with the drums, yet in its own time. Then another hand appeared, pointed and closed, like the head of a snake, and the dancer allowed her whole arm to follow it out, sinuously, like the body of a snake. Her skin was black and it glittered with moisture. Sancia's eyes had left Morvan at last and she was drawing again. Little sketches began to appear all over the page—movements, angles, limbs, hands.

We were becoming absorbed in the dance, each in his or her separate world. The tempo of the drumming quickened again. Suddenly I felt the body of La Belle Victoria very close beside me, but she was conscious of nothing she did. Her lips were parted and her eyes were fixed on the circle, her hands locked on the balustrade in front of her.

A great wildness had seized the drummers. Some put down their heads like butting goats and drummed, with their ears close to their hands, swaying from side to side. Others stood up and played with their drums, throwing them high in the air. Then, from the circle around Zora, a tall, magnificent Arab leaped to his feet, flung his head back and sang a short, passionate, barbaric verse. As he sat

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down, he sprang for a second into the circle, took hold of a corner of the cloth which covered Zora, and dragged on it, disclosing her head and right shoulder.

"The harlots' song!" muttered Morvan, as though remembering distantly his duty as host, to inform his guests of the customs of the country.

Zora's face, emerging, was impassive. It was very black, but there was only the faintest suggestion of negroid features. Her hair was black and straight, shining with oil, caught back behind her head and hanging down on her neck in a little switch like a horse's tail. There were round, shining beads of sweat on those parts of her face which the cloth had not touched as her head had been uncovered. Those drops which had broken were running down her face in little rivulets, like blood. She did not move for a whole, long second, then on her face dawned an ecstatic, tranquil, irresistible smile. Her eyes opened and her body began to move. She swayed and twisted. The cloth gradually loosened around her.

Another man rose from the circle and sang a second verse like the first, and like the first, ended by tugging at the cloth: then another and another, and as they pulled, Zora began to utter thin, pathetic cries, like an animal in pain. In five wild minutes, they stripped her.

As the black cloth fell to the ground, she raised her hands slowly above her head, palms touching, and as they reached their highest point, smoothly and effortlessly, her body followed them, as though some hidden force in the upper air were pulling her towards the sky. Her rise to her feet was accompanied by a stupendous roll of drums which started small and tense and ended in a loud frenzy.

She stood there, a naked, oiled statue, glistening in her own moisture. You could see it pouring from her beautiful face down her neck, over her shoulders, between her breasts. For perhaps twenty seconds, she rested, breathing deeply, then, with an expression of pure ecstasy on her face, she began to dance and mime her story.

It was inexpressibly clear, and to anyone not there, not conditioned to the barbaric atmosphere of that night, it may seem intolerably indecent. The theme was a woman, fighting against possession by a man, gradually being forced to yield, then in the end accepting the inevitable with delight. All its indelicacy was utterly swallowed up by her supreme grace and the perfection of her movements. Sometimes pain and passion distorted her face and racked her body as she danced. But when, at last, she was being forced slowly to the ground by the invisible, non-existent foe who was about to become her lover, the change from terror and fury to languor and savage allurement was a superb piece of acting.

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She ended on a brilliant note of wit, smiling and laughing, wagging her head from side to side, as though indicating that all her past battle had been deception, as though she had intended to surrender from the start, as though there had been, in fact, no struggle at all.

The finale was a sudden stiffening of her whole body as she lay on the ground, smiling. She allowed the light behind her eyes to go out like a lamp, the smile on her lips to fade. Then her eyes closed. It was as though she had fainted.

Around her, the circle of men rose and screened her. A few minutes later they wrapped her in the black cloth under which she had arrived and carried her away, like one who had died, amid rolling drums. On the terrace of the residence no one moved until she was gone.

We were silent for what seemed a very long time. At last Morvan turned away from the dispersing crowd. Men were extinguishing the torches.

"*Et voilà*," he said very quietly. "It is finished!"

His words broke the thread of the dance. It was only then that we saw his wife standing behind us. How long she had been there we did not know. She was very young and looked confused and startled, as though she did not know what to do.

"Ah, Élise!" said Morvan kindly. The whole atmosphere between us had changed. "You're feeling better? You must meet our guests." He introduced us to her one by one, La Belle Victoria last of all. She greeted us shyly. "I saw her from my window, Yves," she said, looking at him and smiling. "For the first time! I shall never miss her dancing again!"

She took him by the arm and smiled nervously at us all.

"I'm sorry," she said, as though everything which had happened before the dance had been her fault.

I think we all felt a trifle foolish, as though, like a tragedy, the splendour of the dance had cleansed us of much pettiness, and lifted up our souls. The thought ran through my mind that La Belle Victoria had had the whip hand over us all, that she alone had had the deepest essence of Zora's dancing. She had been outside the interfering circle of jealousy, which its action had somehow dispersed in us. Salamander-like, she had basked in its hot sun.

For the next two days, she kept a very close eye on us all, as though we were naughty children, and she fully expected us to misbehave. A rather sheepish and deeply absorbed Sancia spent the time almost entirely in the Medina, working from Zora with her sketches and clay, hardly seeing Morvan except for meals.

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On the last morning, Victoria and I found ourselves alone for a moment on the terrace from which we had watched the dance.

"*Docteur*," she said, fixing me with amused, ironic eyes, "it was very funny. On that first evening, it only needed me to fall in love with Zora's bridegroom-to-be, and he to make eyes at me, and for her to notice, and the circle would have been complete!"

"But you didn't," I said, laughing.

"No. This time, I was the one who was interested only in the dancing," she said.

* * *

ANSWERS to ROGUES' GALLERY on page 28

1. *The "remote and ineffectual Don That dared attack my Chesterton" in "Lines to a Don," by Hilaire Belloc.*
2. *The wicked Rebecca, in the play "Rebecca," by Daphne Du Maurier, was supposed to be buried in the church crypt, but her body was discovered in a sailing launch.*
3. *Sir Francis Levison, who committed a murder and ran off with Lady Isabel in the novel "East Lynne," by Mrs. Henry Wood.*
4. *Volpone, the miser who talked so eloquently of riches in the play "Volpone or The Fox," by Ben Jonson.*
5. *Mr. Grimes, the churlish chimney sweep who scorned to be clean, in the fantasy, "The Water Babies," by Charles Kingsley.*
6. *Mr. Hyde, in the story "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," by R. L. Stevenson. Hyde was the evil part of Dr. Jekyll's nature, which materialized and finally committed suicide.*
7. *Polly Perkins, in the ballad of that name, author unknown. She refused her milkman in favour of a bus conductor.*
8. *Mr. Squeers, the cruel schoolmaster in the novel "Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby," by Charles Dickens.*
9. *Mr. Bolfry, in the play of that name, by James Bridie, was really Beelzebub; conjured up at midnight he appeared as a clergyman.*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 5, Import. 8, Labrador. 9, Parish. 10, Conquest. 11, Testator. 12, Hebe. 14, Pie. 15, Editor. 16, Diameter. 19, Ecstatic. 23, Limpet. 26, Rue. 27, Asps. 28, Nocturne. 29, Vicarage. 31, Reject. 32, Cul de sac. 33, Lasses.

Down. 1, Cajoled. 2, Croquet. 3, Edge. 4, Fretted. 5, Impassable. 6, Portage. 7, Rissole. 12, Here. 13, Bits. 14, Preterites. 17, Tips. 18, Ruts. 20, Cholera. 21, Totters. 22, Crevice. 24, Married. 25, Epigram. 30, Colt.

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LOOKING FOR FANNY

He was probably at the bottom of some ocean. What should I say to his wife?

by CHARLES CAUSLEY

DURING the first four years I was in the Navy I was easily the worst sailor in the fleet. I was one of those unfortunate people who suffered from sea-sickness. I often used to wonder why I had joined the Navy at all, but once I was in, it was too late to bother about reasons. Early in 1940 I was drafted to H.M.S. *Sunburst*.

I can see myself now being welcomed by the Coxswain, a huge puffy man with warts and a thin spiky beard sticking out like the rays of the sun all round his face, as I stood anxiously with my kitbag and hammock on the heaving slippery narrow steel deck of the destroyer in the green sea at Scapa.

"Name?" growled the Coxswain. My arrival had interrupted his tea.

"Trethewey," I squeaked. "D/JX197950. Ordinary Coder."

The Coxswain looked at me like some scientist across whose microscope some fabulous insect had suddenly crawled.

"Ordinary *what*?" he said.

"Coder, sir," I said. "Decoding and deciphering signals. It's a new branch."

"Never 'eard of it," said the Coxswain. "You're in number two mess. That's the watchkeepers' mess, down forrard. You'll find it. Abandon ship station: Carley Float Number Four, port side. And remind the Leadin' 'And o' the mess we're sailin' in 'alf an hour. Seventeen-thirty. All right?"

Dismally I gathered up my kitbag and hammock and trudged forrard.

"Oh, an'—what's yer-name!" the Coxswain called after me.

"Sir?" I said.

"You want a shave," he said.

I did, too. I hadn't washed for three days and it felt like three years. I was so miserable it's a wonder I didn't take a jump over the side. But I was glad I didn't, because if I had I should never have met Fanny.

There he was: down in the mess, sitting on the end of the form

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under the wireless speaker, drinking grey tea made with thick condensed milk and reading the births and deaths in an old copy of the *North Cornwall Echo*.

Fanny wasn't his real name, of course. Fanny was called Walter Adams and he came from the fishing village of Port Treloar on the long, sandy estuary of the River Polwenner on the north coast of Cornwall.

He was, in those days, a man of about twenty-six: tall, hefty, very big boned. I remembered that his wrists and fingers seemed to me to be constructed on an entirely larger, looser principle than my own. To look at, Fanny was by no means a typical Cornishman. His immense height, his large freckled face and sandy thatch of hair were what you would expect to find on the plains of Canada or on a sheep-farm in Australia: not in his father's boat-building yard at Port Treloar.

As I climbed down the ladder the rest of the mess—arguing, scuffling, singing, writing, even somebody shaving, ignored me. But Fanny picked up my kitbag.

"Hello," he said in a slow, easy west-country voice. "My name's Walter Adams, Supply Assistant. I'm in the stores. Everybody calls me Fanny. Have some tea. Shockin' stuff: but there's nothing else."

After that I began to feel that life in the *Sunburst* mightn't be so bad. It was, of course. Apart from rolling, she used to leap forward like an electric hare, and—trapped as we were inside—we would seem for a second to be in some space ship on our way to the moon. Then, like a miner's cage, she would suddenly drop flat on the sea with a dreadful metallic bang that rattled every separate screw in the ship. It was terrifying; like something out of the Inferno. And, naturally, my sea-sickness didn't get any better.

Everybody, especially the new hands who knew nothing about it, was full of advice. Lie down, close your eyes, drink cold water, they said. It's a sort of spirit-level in your ears. Stand up. Keep your eyes open. Don't look at the sea. Keep working, and (this was a favourite one) it's your imagination. I resorted to rum, pills, fasting, injections, prayer. All no good. I just went on being ill. Did I say that everybody gave me advice? Everybody, that is, except Fanny. In fact, he never mentioned sea-sickness.

Fanny had one topic of conversation: the fishing village of Port Treloar where he lived. He had spent all his life in the bay and the estuary there, sailing in the boats from his father's yard. One day he produced a faded photograph of himself, with giant paws (the photograph wasn't a very good one) grasping a tiller, gazing sternly at me out of the old brown glossy cardboard.

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"You must come and see me," he used to say. "And my wife. You can get a train from Okehampton. Change at Port Isaac. When you get to Port Treloar, you come across by the ferry. It's a motor boat; Sam Hocken runs the ferry. At least, he did when I was home last: that's eight months ago. When you get to the other side of the river our boat-building yard's right facing you. 'Joseph Adams and Son'—that's me—'Boat Builders, Port Treloar.' Blue letters on a white ground; you can see it for miles. There's a steep hill, and about fifty yards up on the left is our house. A white house. You can't miss it; it's the only one on that side. Come any time. Somebody'll be there."

"I will, Fanny," I said. "It sounds all right."

"It *is* all right," he said. "Of course, I don't go across on the ferry. I row over in my own boat. Got a little boathouse almost underneath the landing-stage. I keep my things there. Funny thing: my boat's tied on the other side of the river waiting for me now. And I'm here: in Freetown. I wish I was a ruddy boat."

I laughed; but Fanny looked serious.

"And don't wait till the end of the war," he went on. "Anyway, it looks like going on for ever."

"Supposing you're not home?" I said.

"Doesn't matter a damn," said Fanny. "I've written and told 'em all about you. And if somebody's got to see my baby before I do, I'd like it to be you."

I never forgot that conversation with Fanny. We were sitting outside the canteen on the King Tom Jetty at Freetown. Just then the liberty-boat came in, and by the time we returned to the ship it was quite dark. The Coxswain was waiting for me on the gangway.

"Trethewey, Ordinary Coder?" he said, giving me that old scientific look.

"Sir?" I said.

"You're goin' on draft. Tonight," he said.

"Ashore, Cox?" I asked hopefully: white man's grave or no white man's grave.

"The *Lifton*. Cruiser. Shake yer up," he said encouragingly. "Boat'll be 'ere for yer in twenty minutes. Git flyin'." And he vanished back into his office like a wicked fairy.

Fanny helped me pack my kitbag and lash my hammock. In an hour I had left the *Sunburst* for ever and was in the *Lifton*, steaming to Simonstown and the far East. Years later I heard that the *Sunburst* stayed in Freetown three weeks, then returned to Londonderry.

Fanny and I wrote a letter or two, of course. But he wasn't what you might call a writing man. And I was often too ill, or too

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far away, to care. Anything might have happened to him. It was a long war for those who had been at sea since 1939. One Christmas —it must have been in Sydney : we were there four days in 1943— I nearly sent him a cable. But it seemed absurd. He might have been dead. I had heard the *Sunburst* had been at Crete. So I didn't really think much more about Fanny until nearly a year later.

I was home on forty-eight days' leave. I got tired of people asking me when I was going back, and telling me how thin I was. Secretly, I was worried about my next draft. I'd left the *Lifton* and was wondering how long my inside would last if I went back to destroyers again. So, to take my mind off it, I decided to go down to Cornwall and see Fanny.

It was just as he had said. I went from Okehampton ; changed at Port Isaac. It was a tiny branch line, and beastly cold November weather. I felt it pretty badly after three years in the Far East. The railway-line hugged the coast : and now and then, through the mist, you could see the grey cold heaving line of the sea. Dreadful.

There was practically nobody else on the train. I began to wish I hadn't come and to wonder how on earth I was going to get back to Wiltshire that night. Looking for Fanny ! Fanny was probably dead ; comfortable at the bottom of some ocean. And what should I say to his wife ?

The train stopped violently as though we had hit something. The wind from the sea came sawing up the little platform like a sheet of ragged ice. I pulled my overcoat about me and wished for the fiftieth time I had worn my uniform. So this was Port Treloar.

Once again, it was precisely as Fanny had described it. Climbing into the motor-boat to cross the ferry, five minutes later, I felt I had known Sam Hocken for years.

" Mr. Hocken ? " I said.

Like all Cornish people, he professed to show no surprise.

" Everybody d'knaw me," he said, and we shot suddenly in a thick spray of muddy water across the estuary. I spent the journey mopping my face and my thin coat.

As I got out of the boat on the other side (I was the only passenger) I thought I would try again. " A friend," I said, " told me about you. In Africa, Mr. Hocken."

" That'll be sixpence," he said. " Look slippy now my sonny. I got to be on t'other side in a few minutes."

I gave it up, gave him the money, stepped on the wooden jetty. I was absolutely alone. The mist and the rain were still blowing in from the sea. I could hardly see the houses on the other side of the river. I might have been a traveller on the landscape of the moon. Then I noticed the signboard.

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There it was: painted in blue and white. "Joseph Adams and Son, Boat Builders, Port Treloar." Just as Fanny had said. My throat seemed to close up. I felt I might easily burst into tears. But a voice suddenly startled me from them.

"So you came, then," it said: and laughed. There was no mistaking that easy, west-country voice. I looked down from the jetty to the edge of the river beneath me. There, standing in a rowing-boat and tying her up, was Fanny. He wore his Navy uniform, a thick scarf, gloves, and—I remember thinking this rather odd—a balaclava helmet. In the bottom of the boat was a large black box with his name and number painted on it. He must have crossed the river behind us.

"Fanny!" I shouted. He laughed again and looked up at me, the mist swirling round his legs.

"Just like you to choose today," he said. "Go on up to the house and break the news I'm coming. I've got to unlock the boat-house and get this box up the ladder."

"Can I help you?" I said.

"You'll break your neck, man," he grinned. "The house is fifty yards up the hill, on the left. Remember? How's your stomach? I'll see you in ten minutes. Oh, and welcome to Port Treloar!"

He hopped out of the boat, balanced on some narrow stone steps, put his hand in a round hole at the top of the door and drew out a large flat key. I set off up the hill.

As soon as I'd rung the bell the door opened. It was Fanny's wife all right. I recognized her at once from the photographs I'd seen. She was a tall girl with a pale milk-white face and red hair. And she showed no surprise at seeing me. Her face didn't move at all, either with pleasure or sorrow. She looked like a girl recovering slowly from some violent illness.

"You're a friend of Walter's," she said. "Mind the baby. He's all over the place."

She led the way into a tiny parlour. There was a fire burning and a kettle boiling.

"Have a cup of tea," she said. "It's a long journey. You're Richard Trethewey, aren't you? Walter used to write about you in his letters from the *Sunburst*. I remember I was pleased that he'd met a writer. Walter made a lot of friends."

"Did Fanny . . . that is, Walter . . . tell you he almost saved my life?" I said.

She laughed: and her face lit up wonderfully. "That's right," she said. "That's what they used to call him. Fanny. Fanny Adams. I've had a lot of visitors since . . . since . . ."

An awful premonition came over me. I suddenly felt as though

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I might, in a second or so, become desperately ill: even die. I put down my cup of tea and stood up.

"You've had a lot of visitors since what?" I said.

I saw the face of the girl, smiling at the baby, suddenly change. Although she must have been ten years younger than me, she looked at me compassionately: like a mother.

"Don't you know?" she said.

There was a dreadful pause. Then she went on. "Walter—Fanny as you call him—was lost at sea two years ago. He was in the *Sunburst*. They were on an anti-submarine patrol, covering a convoy, in the Barents Sea: somewhere off the North Cape. The ship simply sailed off into the blue and disappeared. No signal. Nothing. I had a letter from the Admiralty, but it didn't tell me much. I thought you knew. Fanny's dead."

My hands began to shake so much that I put them in my pocket. I sat down again. My stomach seemed suddenly turned to lead, to roll completely over inside me like a ship in a heavy sea. For a few seconds I could hardly breathe. I felt as though, in a terrifying moment or two, I'd been provided with a new inside. Then I said: "Are you prepared for a shock?"

She looked at me with complete calm.

"Nothing can shock me now," she said, and adjusted one of the baby's socks.

"Listen," I said. "When I came up from the ferry just now, Walter—your husband—Fanny—was tying up his boat down there. He'll be here in a minute. I spoke to him. It was misty; raining. But I spoke to him."

I must say Fanny's wife was an amazing woman. She looked at me like a mother who has to comfort a feverish child.

"Have another cup of tea," she said. "It's the shock. You were very fond of Walter, weren't you? Do you know, for nearly a year, when I was here with the baby, I fancied I could hear him coming up from the river."

"Are you telling me," I said, "that I've seen a ghost?"

"Cornwall's a funny old place," she said. "I shouldn't think about what you've seen."

I stood up and began to shout. "But I saw him standing up in his boat by the jetty! He had a black box with his name painted on it. And his uniform and—yes!—a balaclava! *I tell you I saw him!*"

And that girl just looked up at me and smiled, cool as you like, as if to say: you'll get over it in a moment.

And so I did. And so did she. For the next second the door opened and in walked Fanny, box and all. Of the four of us, including the baby, I don't know who was the most astounded.

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You see, I hadn't seen a ghost down at the ferry. It really was Fanny. And he really had been posted as missing for two years. The *Sunburst* had been torpedoed off the North Cape and the German submarine had picked up three survivors: among them Fanny. They had given them a little food and rum and set them adrift again in one of the leaking ship's boats. Late that night they had been picked up again by some Lapp fishermen and landed on a tiny island north-west of Point Kenahay.

Fanny's two companions had died, and for over a year he had been unable to speak, from the shock and cold, and had been nursed by the Lapps. Then they took him by sledge to a Russian hospital on the Kola Peninsula. When he had recovered and could walk and speak again, he waited for a convoy. In six months he was back in Belfast, they had flown him that week to Devonport and then to the nearby Royal Naval Air Station at St. Petherwin. Fanny had come the last three miles from the Air Station in a furniture van.

"Look at me!" he cried, embracing us all. "I'm a blooming Eskimo!"

And there you have the story. Fanny survived the war all right and is still building boats down at Port Treloar.

As for myself: I was completely changed after the dreadful jolt to my stomach when I thought I'd seen Fanny's ghost. That was in 1944. I spent the last year of the war bouncing about in a corvette: the *Thistle*. And, do you know, I was never sea-sick once. So if you want a really reliable cure for sea-sickness, I suggest that you go down to Cornwall and start looking for Fanny.

* * *

CLAIM FOR ALLOWANCES

One day, as Oscar Wilde stood outside his Tite Street door, preparing to insert his latch-key, a little humble man came up, saying that he had called about the taxes.

"Taxes!" said Wilde, looking down at him from his lordly height. "Why should I pay taxes?"

"But, sir," said the little man, "you are the householder here, are you not? . . . You live here—you sleep here?"

"Ah, yes!" said Wilde, with utter solemnity, "but then, you see—I sleep so badly!"

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *The Romantic '90s*

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Comment on Cats

He is a full lecherous beast in youth, swift, pliant and merrie, and leapeth and reseth on althing that is to fore him : and is led by a straw, and playeth therewith : and is a right heavie beast in age and full sleepy, and lieth slily in wait for mice.

BARTHOLOMAEUS ANGLICUS, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*

When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me?

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

Jeremy Bentham had a cat who rejoiced in the name of Sir John Langborn. In his early days he was a frisky, inconsiderate, and, to say the truth, somewhat profligate gentleman ; and had . . . the habit of seducing light and giddy young ladies of his own race, into the garden . . . but tired at last, like Solomon, of pleasures and vanities, he became sedate and thoughtful—took to the church, laid down his knightly title, and was installed as the Reverend John Langborn. He gradually obtained a great reputation for sanctity and learning, and a Doctor's degree was conferred upon him . . . Great respect was invariably shown his reverence : and it was supposed he was not far off from a mitre, when old age interfered with hopes and honours.

SIR JOHN BOWRING

The trouble with a kitten is
THAT
Eventually it becomes a
CAT.

OGDEN NASH

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★An ARGOSY Short Complete Novel

REVENGE WON'T WAIT

"If he hadn't talked," he asked, "would you have used your knife?"

by RICHARD STERN

THE house was not particularly private. But it did have a small garden, which might be pleasant, and, what was far more important, it commanded a view of the great red-brick establishment at the peninsula's point overlooking the harbour entrance. Jonas was satisfied; it had been many years—more years than Jonas cared to count—since the matter of surroundings, as such, had affected him one way or the other.

He unpacked the two large suitcases, hanging the clothes with care, distributing the smaller articles in the dressing chest, doing these things with an ease born of a thousand repetitions. The stubby gun in its holster—he debated this briefly and then tucked it away with his shirts. The knife, at need, was always in his pocket, and matters could not be expected to, would not, come to a head for some little time.

In the kitchen he poured himself a drink of whisky, drank it slowly, savouring its unaccustomed taste. Then he strolled out into the garden—a tall, straight old man with white hair, astonishingly blue eyes and a nose that hooked like the beak of some great predatory bird. In the sun, among the flowers, he contemplated the brick house, the high wall that surrounded it. He thought of the man who lived inside. He wondered what the beginning would be.

He saw the girl come out of the house next door, carrying a large towel which she spread in full sunlight on the terrace bricks. He watched her in an objective, detached fashion, admiring the swim suit she wore and the manner in which she wore it, the golden tan of her arms and her legs and her body.

"Ah, youth," he said.

The girl said, "Oh!" And she looked up in surprise. And then she was smiling, a friendly, ingenuous smile. "You startled me."

"I am sorry, my dear." He made a small bow.

"It's all right. I'm so used to having nobody there."

Jonas nodded. "The house has been deserted?"

"It's six or eight months now." She was watching him, studying him without wariness. Age, Jonas had long ago decided, had manifold

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advantages. "A young naval lieutenant and his wife lived there last."

"And progeny," Jonas said. "Young naval lieutenants always have progeny. It's one of the requirements, I believe." He saw her smile at that. "Usually one," he said. "Occasionally two, but by that time the young man is qualified to be a lieutenant commander."

"They had one. They were expecting a second." Her eyes were bright, sparkling. "And he has been promoted."

"You see?" Jonas said. He paused. "And so you have been without neighbours." So friendly a young woman, he thought; this was, perhaps, the beginning. It was.

"Not exactly," the girl said. "There are some people over on the ocean side, and there are people in the brick house now."

"Now," Jonas said. He kept his voice expressionless. "Recent arrivals? Like myself?"

"It's a month or two since they came."

Jonas turned. He studied the house. "It is a lovely place." He looked again at the girl. "Do you know the people, my dear?"

"Yes." She said it slowly, almost hesitantly. Jonas wondered at that. Haste, he thought; there was nothing to be gained by haste.

He said, "I was studying my garden when you came out." He looked around at the flowers. "I was wondering what care it would require." He smiled again at the girl. "My knowledge of horticulture is not extensive. Perhaps you would advise me. These hollyhocks—"

The girl laughed. It was a full-throated, pleasant sound. "I'm sorry," she said. "Those are daffodils. Hollyhocks are enormous."

"You see?" said Jonas. "I am a babe in the woods, my dear. I need help." He smiled. "If you would be so generous." He held the gate wide.

IT was well past noon when he went back into the house. He was smiling a little, thinking of matters of soil and humus and pruning and weeding and watering. A pleasant young woman, Jane Williams, and filled with bits of interesting information. "Barlow." He said it aloud. "Howard Barlow." And he was thinking, of course, of the red-brick house, and of the fact that Mr. Barlow's name, in Cuba, had not been Barlow, which was, actually, unimportant; perhaps Mr. Barlow's Cuban name had been the false one. A name, at best, was merely a label.

The fact that Mr. Barlow, living here in the red-brick house, had a boat which he used frequently, Jonas thought, was of much greater importance. In Havana, with yachting available and popular, almost *de rigueur*, Mr. Barlow, who had indulged in many things, had not, until his departure from the island became a matter of survival, ventured anywhere near the water. Jonas drew upon his knowledge of Mr. Barlow to account for the change. It was second-hand knowledge, it was true, but Jonas had taken pains to ensure that the knowledge was accurate.

He thought that he knew Mr. Barlow quite well indeed.

Avarice was Mr. Barlow's mainspring. Jonas, with no illusions

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about his own tendency in that direction, had small difficulty in recognizing it in others. Avarice had prompted Mr. Barlow's activities in Cuba—gambling, prostitution, the peddling of narcotics, whatever came along, including, Jonas reflected, the killing of Luis Portilla, who had been doing Barlow no harm. And avarice had led Mr. Barlow, eventually, too far; had, in short, driven him, with a suitcase filled with money, aboard a small boat one dark night for a dash to Florida and an unpublicized landing in some small cove, and a change of name, and an eventual settling here, in this place, so far away.

It was unlikely that Mr. Barlow's avarice was allowing him now, in his large brick house, merely to vegetate. So far, Jonas thought, so good. And then he heard voices from the garden next door and he moved to the window to investigate.

Jane was standing in her garden, in a dress now, bare-legged, her shoulders square and stiff and her face unsmiling. And facing her stood a large young man in an attitude of angry impotence. Jonas opened the back door and went out into the garden, not strolling now. His face was bland, but his eyes, had you seen them closely, might have reminded you of ice on a clear day—blue, and cold, almost glittering.

JANE saw him first. And the young man, following her eyes, turned and stared. Jonas said, "I have been pondering my lessons, my dear. It was kind of you to instruct me."

"Lessons?" the young man said.

"This is Mr. Thompson," Jane said. "Lieutenant Thompson." She emphasized the title. "Barney is—"

"I'm a policeman."

"Indeed?" Jonas said. "One would never have known, Lieutenant, never in the world." He paused, and some of the frost went out of his eyes, leaving them merely blue, and amused. "My name is Peters, Lieutenant, Jonas Peters. How do you do?" He smiled at Jane. "The lessons, Lieutenant, concerned the technique of cultivating flowers. Does that overstep the local bounds of propriety?" He saw the tight little smile beginning on Jane's face.

"There's probably an ordinance—" she began.

"Cut it out," Barney said.

"If there isn't an ordinance," Jane said, "he can probably haul us in for suspicious conduct . . . Can't you, Barney?"

"I said, 'Cut it out.'"

"Policemen," Jane said, "have to flex their muscles. Wiggle your ears, Barney, and flex your muscles." She was still smiling, but the anger was plain. It showed in her eyes, in the tightness of her cheeks, in the way one hand, at her side, was clenched into a fist.

"Look," Barney said, "I didn't come here to fight."

"Then why did you come?" It was as if they were alone, facing each other, the world shut out.

"Do I need a reason?"

"You do," Jane said.

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His anger was gone now, and the truculence. "I didn't used to."

"That was before you started taking yourself so—"

"Look—"

"At what? You? I've looked at you too long." She paused. Her chin was trembling and the hand at her side was clenched tight.

She nodded towards the brick house. "Why don't you tell him that he shouldn't stop and give me a ride, that he's a bad man? You think because you're a policeman everybody is a bad man—" She took a deep breath. "Or are you afraid to talk to him? Are you afraid to say, 'Mr. Barlow, I don't like you, I don't like any part of you. Stay away from Jane Williams.'" She stopped there. She took another deep breath. "That, perhaps, I could accept."

"All right," Barney said. "I've tried to make it easy—"

"Easy!"

Jonas said, "At this time of day, it has long been my custom"—he saw Barney turn suddenly, face him, the truculence back again—"to have a drink. I find that it soothes the spirit, relaxes the mind." He paused, looking from one to the other. "Will you young people join me?"

He saw them both hesitate, thrown off stride. "You will, I'm sure, my dear," he said to Jane. He was smiling. "To humour an old man." He looked at Barney. "We should be delighted with your company, Lieutenant."

"I—" He looked at the girl. He looked at Jonas. His eyes went briefly to the brick house and then back again. "Another time."

"Mr. Barlow will keep," Jonas said. He had the gate open now. He held out his hand to the girl. "The evening is the lonely time. I am fortunate indeed in finding a neighbour so soon."

She stirred, hesitated, and then came forward through the gate. Jonas' hand touched her elbow gently as she passed. "You won't mind the kitchen door, I'm sure, my dear." He looked at Barney. "Lieutenant?"

"All right," Barney said.

They sat in the small living room, Jonas in the large chair, Jane on the sofa, Barney sitting straight and uncomfortable in the occasional chair against the wall. Jonas directed the conversation, keeping it purposely innocuous, keeping it far away from the subject of Mr. Barlow. There would be ample time to pick up a working knowledge of the brick house, of the people who lived in the brick house, their habits, their activities. In the meantime, local lore was always of interest and, not infrequently, of value.

"I am enchanted with the locality," he said. "You have lived here long, Lieutenant?"

"I was born here."

"Indeed? A native son. They are rare, I understand." He turned to the girl. "You, too, my dear?"

She nodded.

"It must be a splendid place for a child." He paused and sipped his drink. "Sun and water, swimming, sailing, fishing perhaps. . . . Is there good fishing here, Lieutenant?"

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There was fishing; Barney discussed it, working on his drink, his mind obviously on other matters. "And barracuda, of course," he said, "and sharks. If you want sharks."

"Thank you, no," Jonas said. "I have spent some time in the tropics, the islands of the Caribbean, the islands of the Pacific." He stopped there. He smiled into his drink. His audience, he decided, was inattentive. Barney was looking at Jane; Jane was looking at the floor. "Another drink, perhaps, Lieutenant?" Jonas said.

"No, thanks," Barney said. He stood up. "I'll be on my way." He stood there, large and solid, looking down at the girl. "I have a little job to do."

Jonas saw him to the door. He watched him drive away. He turned back to the girl.

"Nothing will happen, my dear," he said. "The lieutenant may make himself a trifle ridiculous, but that is all. He appears to be quite capable of taking care of himself in any physical sense." He paused. "And," he added, "he is a policeman, and that, in itself, is a safeguard."

She said, "Why do I behave like that? Why do I say those things?"

He sat down. "Because you are young, my dear, and proud, and essentially strong. I knew a young woman very much like yourself, once. I fancied that I was in love with her." Which was untrue. "She was a princess." Which was true. "Not that it matters."

The girl said, "He has no right to—to be so damned possessive."

"Strong young men are like that."

"There's been nothing," Jane said, "nothing at all. Howard—"

"Howard Barlow," Jonas said. He looked at his glass. "The Lieutenant could be right. Mr. Barlow could be the wrong sort of person for you to know."

"That's silly. He's perfectly all right; he's perfectly decent."

"Is he?" Jonas said.

He was silent for a little time, annoyed with himself, annoyed that his mind should insist upon a sort of choice. His heart, rather, not his mind. His mind said that this young woman who happened to live next door was no concern of his, no concern at all. His heart—this tendency had been growing recently; he had noticed its growth with something akin to alarm. It was, he supposed, one of the penalties of age. It embarrassed him.

"Is he?" Jonas said again. "I don't think he is decent, my dear."

"You don't know him. You're just taking Barney's part."

"We men," Jonas said. He smiled.

"Or do you know him?"

"No." And that was the simple truth, and could, of course, be left to stand. But the girl watched him, and this weakness, this embarrassing sentimentality— "Let us say that I know of him, that I have heard of him, and that what I know, what I have heard—"

"Who are you?" the girl said. She was sitting up straight,

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staring at him. "Why are you here? How do you just happen to turn up?"

Thus far, Jonas thought, *and no further. To all things there are limits.* "Fate," he said. "What else? Fate and a matter of health." Mr. Barlow's health, to be sure; not his own. But he saw no need to explain this. He thought of the large, truculent young man who represented the police. Police, Jonas had long ago discovered, were not infrequently an annoyance.

He thought again of Barney after the girl had gone. By sympathy, in the problem of Mr. Barlow, he, Jonas, and Barney were on the same side—were, in short, natural allies. By and large, Jonas disliked allies. They hampered; their motives were frequently not one's own; and their ethics—in this instance a policeman's ethics—could very easily turn out to be embarrassing.

There was, for example, the matter of compensation, on which Jonas' views were clear and logical and unfettered by convention. Would it seem just, Jonas would have argued had he been asked, that he, a private citizen, should devote time and money, should travel several thousands of miles, should exert himself physically and mentally in the carrying out of a project which would benefit humanity—all of this, he would have asked, without compensation?

On the face of it, the question was absurd. A householder called in a man to exterminate his cockroaches or the beetles in his garden, and expected to pay for the service. But Jonas was not even asking that; payment, just recompense, Jonas intended, was to be provided by the cockroach himself, whereupon the householder, in this instance civilization as a whole, was rid of a pest without cost. The logic, surely, was irrefutable. But it was probable, he thought, that Barney would fail to appreciate it.

It was a matter that required further cogitation. He closed the house and went out to the street and strolled into the town. He located, by instinct, the town's one good restaurant. He had one cocktail before his soup, a half bottle of white wine with his sole. With coffee he drank a small brandy. Then he strolled home and went to bed.

HE arrived at the police station the next morning at ten o'clock. The sergeant at the desk was friendly and polite. Barney, in his small office, exhibited only wariness.

"I did not come to impose upon our acquaintance, Lieutenant," Jonas said. "My visit is, in a sense, official."

"I see," Barney said. He watched the old man sit down, watched him take out a gold cigarette case and offer it. He shook his head.

"You saw Mr. Barlow last evening?" Jonas said.

"I did." The statement was neither friendly nor unfriendly.

Jonas nodded. The young man's attitude was as it should be, as he had counted on its being. "You are wondering," he said, "what concern it is of mine. I will tell you, Lieutenant."

He held the cigarette in his fingers. He studied it for a moment or two. "My government—" He stopped there. He shook his

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head. "Excuse me, Lieutenant. Let us forget that. Let me begin again." He paused. "The man whom you know as Barlow—Howard Barlow—has at one time or another, used several names. One of them—Johnson—was the name he used when, until quite recently, he lived in Cuba. His activities there—" He sketched them in some detail, and he watched Barney's attention sharpen. "And so he left Cuba and, for reasons best known to himself, came here."

Barney picked up a pencil. He looked at it for a long time. He set it down again and said nothing.

"Frankly, Lieutenant," Jonas said, "the government of Cuba is well satisfied by Mr. Johnson's—that is, Mr. Barlow's—disappearance. He might, had he stayed to stand trial, have proved a little embarrassing, in that his connections, his, shall we say, sphere of influence, extended far. You can, I'm sure, understand the dilemma which Mr. Barlow himself resolved by fleeing the country."

"I think I see what you mean," Barney said. He was at his ease here in his own surroundings; the truculence, the uncertainty of yesterday was entirely gone. He was a man at his job, competent, calm. It passed through Jonas' mind that it would do the girl good to see her policeman thus.

"Officially, then," Jonas said, "the government of Cuba has no interest in Mr. Barlow."

This was, as far as Jonas knew, no more than plain truth. The government of Cuba did not confide in Jonas Peters—was probably not, in fact, even aware of Jonas Peters' existence.

"On the other hand," Jonas said, "the government of Cuba would not be saddened if Mr. Barlow were to come to grief here in the States.

"If I could be of any help," Jonas said, and he let it hang there like a bait.

Barney picked up the pencil again. He studied it, and then he studied Jonas. "You represent the government of Cuba?"

Jonas spread his hands. "Certainly not, Lieutenant." He was smiling. "Officially, the government of Cuba does not recognize me."

"Then—" Barney began, and there he stopped. "I see," he said. "It's like that. You have your own sort of secret—"

"Please, Lieutenant." He had one fine hand raised in warning. "I am a private citizen. Let us leave it at that."

"All right," Barney said. He, too, was smiling. "We'll leave it like that." He picked up the pencil once more and turned it round in his big hands, watching it, his smile gone now. "Barlow," he said, "has been under—" He stopped there. He set the pencil down. "I'll tell you, Mr. Peters. Let me digest all this for a bit. What you've told me about our friend—"

"Of course." Jonas picked up his hat. "That is only reasonable, Lieutenant." The seed was planted. It would, Jonas thought, burgeon and prosper mightily. Like young Jane Williams' flowers. "You can reach me at my house."

Barney nodded. He was pleased. "We knew a little about him

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already. What you've told me will help." He watched Jonas stand. "I'll drop in, probably this afternoon."

"We'll have a drink," Jonas said.

OUT in the street, in the sun once more, he turned towards the town, walking slowly, reviewing the conversation and finding it satisfactory. He had told no lie; he had merely, by shrewd exercise of timing and judgment, allowed an impression to become implanted in the lieutenant's mind. And if the impression happened to be fallacious, was that Jonas' fault?

He strolled on, pondering the matter of luck, which, it was obvious, was inevitably on the side of those who thought clearly and planned well and executed without timidity. The lieutenant's last few sentences—he repeated these to himself, finding in them proof that his decision to join forces with the police had been sound.

He was past the centre of the town when the big car went by, headed out along the peninsula. The driver, neither young nor old, dark-haired, handsome, wearing a tweed jacket and a small foulard scarf in lieu of a tie—the driver Jonas recognized. "Mr. Barlow," he said, almost inaudibly. "Mr. Johnson-Barlow. You are looking well. That we shall have to remedy."

And then he looked at the passenger in the car, and his eyes, for only a small moment, took on their frosty quality. "Miss Williams," he said to himself. "The lieutenant, Miss Williams, would not approve. As a matter of fact, neither do I." He continued homeward, walking a little more quickly.

The car was not parked in front of Jane's house. Nor was Jane at home. Jonas sighed, thinking that young women were headstrong creatures.

There was a gate set into the brick wall. Jonas went through it, along a garden path, up to the front door. He rang the bell and stood there, waiting. It would be a man, of course, a bodyguard of some sort. It was. The man was large and he wore a white coat, and his attitude was polite, almost respectful.

"Mr. Barlow," Jonas said. "Is he at home?"

"Who is calling?"

It was a well-trained thug, Jonas thought; they did things better these days. He could recall when it had not been so. "I bring a message for Mr. Barlow. From an old friend of his. From Cuba."

The man's eyes changed a little, but that was all. "I think there must be some mistake. Mr. Barlow—"

"I think you had better ask Mr. Barlow," Jonas said. "The name of the friend was Portilla—Luis Portilla. You can remember that?"

"I told you there was some mistake—"

"There was, indeed," Jonas said. He was smiling still, but the frost in his eyes was plain. "Luis Portilla is dead. I will wait here while you tell Mr. Barlow."

There was not long to wait. The man in the white coat opened the door again and stood aside. He accepted Jonas' hat without a

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word, and led the way across a hall, past the dining room into a panelled library. Windows looked out over the bay and the private beach with its landing stage, the bricked and sheltered verandah. The man closed the door and stood almost against it. He put Jonas' hat on a chair.

Jonas said, "Wouldn't it be as well if you had your gun out?"

"I can get it. Don't worry."

"Worry?" Jonas said, and then he turned, smiling. "Ah, Mr. Barlow. How do you do, sir?"

Barlow closed the glass door from the verandah. He frowned a little, looking at Jonas, studying him. "What's on your mind?"

"Didn't your man tell you?" Jonas said. "I was afraid he might forget the name." He took out the gold cigarette case, opened it, held it out. Barlow ignored it. "No?" Jonas said. "You don't mind if I do?" He chose a cigarette and lighted it. "Luis Portilla," he said. "Surely you remember him?"

Barlow walked over to the large desk. He leaned against it. His eyes had not left Jonas' face. "Who are you?" he said.

"My name is Peters—Jonas Peters." He wondered if the name would mean anything. He watched Barlow carefully and decided that it did. "Luis—"

"Luis was yellow."

Jonas pursed his lips. He nodded. "Perhaps. I deplore your terminology, but your judgment may be accurate. In many respects Luis was a poor thing. But Luis and I were associates in the small casino which he managed, which you took over. You were unaware of that? A pity. I was the absentee partner, Mr. Barlow. I miss the small but steady profits."

"Well?"

"There is another matter," Jonas said. He paused. "Luis was also my friend."

Barlow said nothing.

"I am attached to my friends," Jonas said. "I do not have so many that I can afford to lose one without a sense of depletion."

"What's the point?" Barlow said.

Jonas was unsmiling. "Miss Williams is my friend too."

"So?" Barlow pushed himself away from the desk. "Another friend of hers was here last night. A big dumb policeman."

"I am not a big dumb policeman, Mr. Barlow. Bear that in mind."

He was beside the door now. He opened it. He was smiling again. He saw Jane looking at him. "This is a most pleasant surprise, my dear," he said. "I had no idea." He stepped out on the verandah. "A lovely place, is it not?"

Jane said, "Barney sent you."

"Barney? Your friend, the lieutenant? No, my dear. I came to introduce myself to Mr. Barlow . . . did I not, Mr. Barlow? We had a mutual friend—we were just reminiscing about him."

"Last night you said—" Jane began. She stopped there.

"Yes, my dear?"

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She shook her head. She stood up. She looked at Barlow. "I have to go."

"How about our sailing trip?" Barlow said.

"Please. Another time. I—"

"I'll walk with you," Jonas said. "If I may. I was just on my way home."

There was no hindrance. Jonas had been sure there would be none. In the girl's presence, Barlow would do nothing, would allow nothing to be done. Later, perhaps—he revised that in his mind—later, surely, there would be a move of some sort in his direction. It would be interesting to see what form the move might take. In the meantime, there was this matter of the girl who walked silently beside him, who, logically, meant nothing to him, nothing at all.

"It was imprudent of you, my dear," Jonas said.

"Accepting a lift home from town? Sitting on a verandah in broad daylight? Even accepting an invitation to go sailing?" They walked a few steps more in silence. "You're beginning to sound like Barney."

"Am I?" He decided that he was. "It was unintentional." He hesitated. "Suppose I were to tell you that Mr. Barlow is a most unsavoury person, that even allowing for present-day tolerance—"

"You made a point of introducing yourself to him," Jane said. "You have a friend in common. My being there had nothing to do with your visiting him. Isn't that what you told me?"

"So it was," Jonas said. "So it was, indeed." It was what came, he thought, of indulging in gallantry. At his age.

"I don't see anything funny," Jane said. "Apparently you do."

Jonas nodded. He stood on her porch, his hat in his hand, and watched her open the door. "There are times," he said, "when I find myself an object for laughter. This is one of them."

"I'm glad you do," Jane said. "And now, if you'll excuse me."

"I am dismissed," said Jonas. He walked slowly down the path, pondering the spectacle of a man hoist with his own petard.

IT was late afternoon when Barney arrived. Jonas, from his own house, saw the car pull up to the kerb. He watched the second, smaller man get out from the far side and come up the path with Barney. He held the door open for them.

"This is George Potter," Barney said.

Jonas made a small bow. Potter was about medium height, somewhere around forty, Jonas judged, and completely lacking in Barney's large, open ingenuousness. "A colleague?" Jonas said.

Potter said nothing. He was watching Jonas. Barney said, "In a way. George is a Federal man."

"I see," Jonas said, and in his mind a little warning bell began to ring, quietly, insistently. Dealing with local police was one thing; dealing with Federal people, with their distressingly complete Wash-

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ington files and their penchant for using them, was something else again. "You'll join me in a drink, gentlemen?"

He sat down in his large chair and waited, wary now for the first time. He watched Potter put his drink down untasted, which might mean anything.

Potter said, "We know quite a bit about you, Mr. Peters."

"Do you, indeed? I am flattered." He kept his face bland, polite.

"I imagine you'd feel very flattered if you were to see your own dossier in Washington."

"Tales," Jonas said, "stories, no doubt."

"Reports, Mr. Peters, from our embassies, our consulates. From Lima, from Port-au-Prince, from Caracas, from Rio, from San José."

"Pleasant spots, all of them," Jonas said. "Memories one stores up against one's old age." He watched Potter pick up his glass and drink. "Nothing derogatory, I hope."

Potter set the glass down. "That depends on the viewpoint. Nothing we're particularly interested in prosecuting you for, if that's what you mean. A revolution here and there, a little gun-running, a small matter of a president who disappeared—"

"I always wondered what became of him," Jonas said. He sighed. That money was long since spent. "In many ways a charming fellow. Aspirations towards dictatorship, of course, but—"

"We knew all about him," Potter said. He leaned back in his chair. "I tell you this, Mr. Peters, so that you'll have no illusions that we're ignorant. Concerning you, that is."

"The thought," said Jonas, "would never have entered—"

"Just so." Potter leaned forward now. "Our friend in the brick house—you can help us there, I think. You've told Barney some of his background. I'd like all of it—all that you know." He took a small notebook from his inside pocket. He rested it on his knee, pencil poised. "Facts, Mr. Peters, if you please."

It was, Jonas reflected, a distressing state of affairs. Facts which he had so laboriously gathered in Cuba, facts which, in some instances, represented an actual cash outlay—these were the facts which Potter so blandly requested. Nor was he under any illusions concerning the attitude Washington would adopt were Potter to become convinced that he, Jonas, was unco-operative. And Washington's power was great, its arm long. Candour, he decided, was the only possible course.

"Delighted," he said. A trade, he thought; an exchange of information. This was always possible. "My first information concerning Mr. Johnson-Barlow dates back five . . . no, six years. It was shortly after the close of the recent world-wide unpleasantness."

Potter listened, his eyes bright and sharp, his pencil making rapid notes, jotting down dates and places, names, facts. Once or twice he nodded, as if verifying from his own knowledge what Jonas said; and once or twice he frowned, and paused, and studied Jonas' face. Once he said, "You're sure of this? Barlow and Vidali? *The* Vidali?"

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"Vittorio Vidali," Jonas said. "The one who turned up in Mexico City shortly before Trotsky was killed. The one who was reputedly in New York before Tresca was killed. The one—"

"I know about him," Potter said. "You're sure it was he who visited Barlow in Havana?"

"It was he," Jonas said. He paused. He sipped his drink. "One day I should like to meet Comrade Vidali."

"One day," Potter said, "I hope you do, Mr. Peters."

"We hope for the same reason, I trust?"

Potter smiled. It was the first smile that Jonas had seen on his face. "The same reason. Now, if you'll go on, Mr. Peters—" He bent over his notebook again. The smile was gone.

Barney said, "I'm just a policeman. You two—" He spread his big hands. "You're away over my head."

"Another drink, Lieutenant?" Jonas said. "We shall be through shortly." He saw Potter look up. "I am not an inexhaustible mine of information, Mr. Potter. The vein is petering out."

"It doesn't matter," Potter said. "I think I've got what I want." He leaned back in his chair. "You've been quite a help."

"Delighted." He smiled. "What is Mr. Barlow engaged in now? Or am I prying?"

Potter was silent for a moment. He closed the notebook and tucked it away in his pocket. "I'm afraid you're prying." He stood up. "If you're ready, Barney."

JONAS stood on his doorstep and watched them get into Barney's car, watched the car pull away. No trade, he thought. He shook his head. It was becoming increasingly difficult for a man to earn a living. He turned to go in.

Jane Williams' voice said clearly, "You aren't at all acquainted with Barney, are you, Mr. Peters? There is nothing between you two." Her voice was heavy with sarcasm. She was standing at her own door.

"There is nothing between us, my dear," Jonas said. He sighed. "Nothing at all."

He went into his house and closed the door. It was some time later when it occurred to him that he might have dealt differently with the young woman's obvious anger. But at the moment his thoughts were concentrated on his own problems.

Matters had, he thought, been progressing satisfactorily. Allied with the police, in the form of Barney, it should have been no great trick to catch Mr. Barlow on the wrong foot and see to it that he was put out of the way. And in the matter of compensation—Barney's ingenuousness would undoubtedly have provided opportunity for compensation. A man of Mr. Barlow's character and background would have, at all times, a large supply of cash on hand, and if it were to disappear, who was to say that it had been there in the first place?

But now Mr. Potter of Washington had entered the operation, had, in fact, taken it over, and, with a knowledge of Jonas and

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probably a shrewd idea of Jonas's interest in Mr. Barlow, politely shut the door on the possibility of two-way co-operation. Jonas mixed himself another drink.

Prudence, he thought, dictated that a man, faced with insuperable odds, left the game and returned again, perhaps, when the balance had changed. It was then that the telephone rang. He walked into the living room to answer it.

"Peters," the voice said.

Jonas began to smile. "Mr. Barlow. What a pleasant surprise." He paused. "Or, should I say, Mr. Johnson?"

"My name is Barlow." The voice was flat, angry. "I gave you your chance this morning to tell me what was on your mind."

"Why, so you did," Jonas said. "I remember now."

"All right. Now I'll tell you what's on mine."

"An exchange of confidences. How pleasant."

"Get out, Peters," Barlow said. "And stay out. I won't tell you again. I—" The voice stopped, picked up again, altered in tone, muffled. "Sit down, I'll be with you in a moment." And then, into the 'phone once more, "That's all."

JONAS hung up slowly and picked up his drink. There were times, he thought, when it appeared that matters were ordained. Mr. Barlow, threatening—actually threatening.

Jonas tasted his drink. Mr. Potter be damned, he thought; Mr. Potter and the entire majesty of the United States government, files, dossiers, powers, and all. When it became a matter of honour . . . He thought of Luis again. His eyes were frosty, almost glittering. Mr. Barlow, he thought, had indeed made a mistake. And then the doorbell rang.

He approached the door warily. It occurred to him that Mr. Barlow, impatient, perhaps—no, that was ridiculous. Mr. Barlow wanted no trouble. He jerked the door open. Barney, on the threshold, blinked once or twice in astonishment.

"And what do you want, Lieutenant?" Jonas said.

Barney stood where he was. "I thought that Jane might be here."

"She is not."

"She isn't at home."

"Miss Williams does not honour me with a schedule of her activities, Lieutenant." And then he paused, finding his own attitude childish. "She could be almost anywhere, could she not, Lieutenant?" But he thought of the telephone call, of the interruption in the middle of it. "I think I know where she is."

"Barlow's, you mean."

"Miss Williams is a young woman of spirit, Lieutenant. She resents what appears to her to be a pointless possessiveness. She fancies, even, that you and I are allied in a determination to—"

"I'm not very clever," Barney said. "I'm just a policeman. I'm pretty good at that job, Mr. Peters. But I don't pretend to understand people like Barlow and what they do. Or people like you."

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Jonas doubted if he could have put it better himself. "You are suspicious of me, Lieutenant? But I am a very uncomplicated—"

"Potter told me quite a bit about you. He showed me the description he got from Washington, and he explained a lot more. You don't work for the government of Cuba. You don't work for anybody except yourself. I don't know why you lied to me."

"Lied? I, Lieutenant? I told you no lie."

Barney was silent for a moment or two. "No, I guess you didn't. You were clever. You let me figure out the lie myself."

"If you have been under a misapprehension, Lieutenant—" He raised his hands, lifted his shoulders.

"I told you I wasn't very clever," Barney said. "So I fell for it." He held out his hands and studied them for a moment. Then he looked up again. "I'm a policeman. And this is my town. That's what it boils down to. I like my town. I like it clean, decent. There isn't room in it for you or anybody like you."

"You're showing your muscles, Lieutenant?"

"No. I'm just telling you. I can make it hot for you here, in my own town. And I will."

"And Mr. Barlow?" Jonas said.

"Potter will take care of Barlow. He doesn't need any help." He paused. "I guess that's all."

JONAS watched him walk out to his car, get in, drive round the corner, heading for the brick house. It was strange, he thought; there was, in his mind, no anger; there was not even annoyance. There was only a certain amount of grudging admiration for large, ingenuous Lieutenant Thompson.

He stood there for a long time, thinking of this, looking out into the night.

When the shot came, he reacted immediately, without thought, jumping back from the doorway, finding and flipping the light switch. He was crouched there in the dark by the time his conscious mind told him that the shot had come from some little distance, from the direction of Barlow's house.

"The waltz seems to be beginning," he said, half whispering, and he waited for more shots. But there was only silence and the distant, dull booming of the surf.

And then, very faintly, he heard a woman's voice, raised in a cry. And that was all.

In the darkness he found his hat and put it on, went out of the house and closed the front door carefully behind him. He walked quickly, smiling to himself, humming a catchy little tune that once upon a time, when such histrionics had been necessary, had been widely employed as a rallying and marching song by peasantry who had stood as much as they could bear. It had always amused him that it had been he who had translated "Yankee Doodle" into colloquial Spanish.

The brick house was dark. Barney's car stood by the gate, empty, and, as Jonas watched, he saw a white coat come through

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the gate and disappear into the car. The engine started, and the car, without lights, drove off. Jonas went through the gate and along the side of the house, and there, crouched in the darkness, he watched.

A cabin cruiser lay now at the dock in front of the house, her running lights lighted, her ports dark. He could hear the soft bubble of her exhaust, and he saw someone lean out from the cockpit. He followed the man's silhouette across the cockpit and into the main cabin.

He listened, but the house was quiet. And then Barlow's voice, the words indistinct, came to him from the cruiser. He left the shelter of the house and ran, crouching, out along the dock. He pressed himself against the flare of the cruiser's hull.

Barlow said, "You damned fool, losing your head like that."

And another voice—a new voice, "You said that before."

"And I say it again. There wasn't any need. He could have blown off a little and made himself look silly, and then gone away, and taken the girl with him, and there still would have been time."

"He was mad, good and mad; maybe he wouldn't have gone—"

"I tell you he would. He only came for the girl."

"He's a policeman, isn't he?"

"That's just the—wait a minute."

There was a moment's silence. Jonas strained close to the cruiser's hull. He could hear the high-pitched whining sound of code mingling with radio interference. "That isn't it," Barlow said. "That's not the signal."

"I can read code too. They'll keep below?"

"He won't cause us any trouble."

"And the girl?"

"She's tied up and gagged, all neat and nice. She's quite a dish."

"You can forget that," Barlow said. "You've done enough. Losing—"

"All right. Lay off. It's done now. You've got it worked out?"

"Yes," Barlow said. "If we'd had more time—"

"But we didn't. You've got it worked out now? The way it is?"

"Yes," Barlow said. "Now shut up." The whining code sounds came again, briefly, and then repeated. "There it is. Let's go. You cast off. I'm going below."

So there it was, Jonas thought; as plain, as clear as one could ask. The large, ingenuous lieutenant, blundering in—he could almost picture the scene in his mind. The girl there, angry, having come to Barlow's house only out of spite, only because she had been told that she should not. And the lieutenant, angry at Jonas, angry at the girl, venting his anger on Barlow, who was, of course, the cause of it all.

The lieutenant in full wrath, he imagined, would be a sight to behold. A large, formidable young man—no one, however large, was formidable with a bullet in him. That, of course, had been the shot he had heard. And the girl, a witness to the shooting—here was the

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old conflict once more, heart versus mind, logic versus sentimentality. It was awkward, Jonas thought; it was embarrassing.

Behind him the house was dark, quiet. The man who had driven off in the lieutenant's car would return, of course, but he was only one man, and he would be expecting nothing. No, the house, for all practical considerations, was to be considered empty, unprotected, and burglary—Jonas disliked the term, it connoted dishonesty; a search for a fee, rather, the extraction of legitimate recompense—would be a relatively simple operation. Jonas could see nothing unscrupulous in extracting his fee in advance.

That much was clear. On the other hand—he thought of the lieutenant, of young Jane Williams—Jane of the garden and the knowledge of things horticultural; of the neighbourliness, the friendliness.

He heard the man overhead coming rapidly aft along the deck, heard him step down into the cockpit. And then his steps sounded on a ladder of some sort, and Jonas raised his head cautiously and saw the man, in dim silhouette, mounting to the flying bridge. The cruiser was drifting slowly away from the dock. Jonas cast one last look at the house, dark, naked, defenceless. Then he stepped over the gunwale, crossed the cockpit, crouched against the cabin bulkhead, and began to hum, soundlessly, the catchy little tune.

The engines were throbbing now, pouring out their power. The cruiser's stern settled, steadied. Her bow lifted. White water frothed along her sides, trailed astern in a spreading wake. She was into the channel, and then clear of the jetties, and the swells began to meet her, changing her motion, rocking her a little with their force. It was cold.

IN the cabin—Jonas dwelt upon that—in the cabin there was warmth. There was also Mr. Barlow, who, no doubt, had a gun. Jonas thought of his own gun in its holster among his shirts. A more ridiculous place for a gun he could not, offhand, imagine. This entire project, from start to finish, had been badly mismanaged. It was what came, he reflected, from allowing himself to be distracted.

He wondered if one day he would learn to control his chivalrous impulses. He put his hand in his pocket and felt the knife. It was reassuring, but of questionable value. He opened the cabin door a trifle, looked carefully inside. The cabin was empty. Mr. Barlow was apparently below. Jonas stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

It was a large cabin. Forward was another door. Jonas went to it, put his ear against it and listened. He could hear Barlow's voice. He turned the latch soundlessly and opened the door just a crack.

"It was a mistake," Barlow said, "but it was your own fault. You've been crowding me, and—"

"I haven't even begun to crowd you yet." This was Barney; and Jonas, putting his eye to the crack, could see Barney lying on a

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bunk, one arm crossed on his chest and a white towel, stained red, bound tightly around his shoulder. The girl, well secured, lay in the bunk across from him.

"All right," Barlow said, "have it your own way. If there'd been more time—" He shrugged.

He was too far away, Jonas thought, and he was turned sideways. There was not a chance to get close enough to him. And he held a gun in his hand. Loosely, it was true, but in a position of readiness.

"But there wasn't enough time," Barlow said. "So that's that. All I could do was what I did—bring you along."

"And sooner or later," Barney said, "you'll have to let us go."

The large, ingenuous lieutenant, Jonas thought. Potter, the Federal man, would have known better.

"Yes," Barlow said. "I'll let you go tonight." He paused. "A few miles offshore." He paused again. "Your car is parked on the beach. Your clothes will be there, too, by morning. Yours and hers, both. You went for a moonlight swim. You didn't come back."

Jonas watched Barney's face. It changed a little, seemed to set itself; his eyes were hard. He was to remember that later, to wonder if that had been the moment of change.

"There are currents," Barney said. "You don't know this coast. And bullet holes will be hard to explain."

Barlow had turned now. He was backing away slowly towards the door.

"By the time the barracuda are through," he said, "and the sharks—" He paused, just inside the door, the gun held loose in his hand. "A few more holes won't make any difference."

Barney got himself up on one elbow. "The Federal people are after you," he said. "You haven't got a chance. So far, what they want you for isn't murder."

"No? What do they want me for?"

"I don't know," Barney said. "But it isn't murder."

Barlow nodded. "You're bluffing, of course." His voice was softer, satisfied. "It was a nice try."

He reached behind him for the door latch, opened it and backed through, the gun still pointing.

"As a matter of fact," Jonas said, "it was not a bluff, Mr. Barlow." He jammed his stiff forefinger into the small of Barlow's back. "Neither is this. Lower your hand gently, if you please." He watched the hesitation, and then the hand dropped slowly. "Just so," Jonas said. "Thank you." He took the gun from Barlow's fingers, transferred it to his own left hand. "And now we will move forward a few paces, Mr. Barlow." He followed, closing the door behind him.

Barney said, "How did you—"

"Examining the gift horse's mouth, Lieutenant?" Jonas said. "How ungrateful of you."

He glanced at the girl, lying on her side in her bunk, her hands behind her, her ankles tied together, the gag in her mouth. Her eyes

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were wide, staring. "Mr. Barlow and I," Jonas said, "have an old account between us."

"There's another man," Barney said. "Tie this one up."

"There is no need," Jonas said. "Mr. Barlow, I am sure, will not cause us any—" he had raised his right hand across his body as he talked, holding it flat, palm down. He struck now with a chopping motion, landing behind Barlow's left ear, "—inconvenience," he finished, and he caught Barlow before he hit the deck, half carried and half dragged him forward and let him fall, face down, into the third bunk. He picked up Barlow's legs and swung them in. "Ropes can be cut, Lieutenant, or untied. Mr. Barlow will keep for a little time." He straightened up and tucked the gun into his pocket. "Now the impulsive Miss Williams."

He cut the ropes that held her. He untied the gag. He helped her to sit up, and he watched her, as she bent forward, breathing hard, retching a little in deep muscular spasms. He touched her shoulder. "You will be all right, my dear." He sighed. "The elasticity of youth." He looked at Barney. "And you, Lieutenant?"

"I'm all right." Barney was watching the girl. She was sitting up straight now, rubbing her wrists. "I'm not very clever," he said. He was talking to her now, only to her. "Getting you into this."

"You?" She was shaking her head slowly, her eyes on the towel that bound his shoulder, on the red stain that was so clear. "'The impulsive Miss Williams,'" she said. "He had it right, or almost right. The idiotic—" She stopped there, and her chin began to tremble, and her face was suddenly tight. "Oh, Barney!" It was almost a wail. She moved forward, down on her knees beside his bunk. "Barney!" she said again.

And Barney's good hand touched her head, her hair, gently at first, and then almost savagely.

"It's all right," Barney said. "It's almost over now. Just forget it."

His face showed that it was not forgotten, that he was thinking still of a car parked on the beach, of black water at night, of the things that Barlow had mentioned—barracuda, sharks. He looked up at Jonas. "Can you get the other one?"

"But of course, Lieutenant." His eyes went briefly to Barlow, lying still and motionless in the bunk. "There is one matter, however," he said. "I am not a sailor. Someone will be required to operate this vessel, to get us back."

"Not back," Barney said. He said it slowly, with finality.

JONAS thought of the change in Barney's face, the manner in which it had set itself, the hardness that had appeared in his eyes as he had faced Barlow.

"No?" he said. "Where, then?"

Barney said, "Where was Barlow going that he didn't have time, that he was in such a hurry that he was willing to take a chance on—"

"Murder?" Jonas said. "A good question. I don't know the answer."

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Jane said, "Barney—"

"Be quiet."

The change went even this deep, Jonas thought. He watched the girl and saw the wonder in her face. She said nothing.

"Barlow can't talk yet," Barney said. "Will the other one know?"

"I assume so," Jonas said. "There appears to be no indecision in his course. Barlow gave him no instructions before they started."

Barney nodded. "We can make him talk."

Jonas shook his head in slow wonderment. He was smiling. A young man, truculent, it was true, and courageous, but hitherto a follower rather than a leader, willing to accept rebukes from Jane Williams, willing to be dominated by Potter. And now . . .

"I think you go too far in your sudden zeal, Lieutenant. We are three: an old man, a wounded man and a girl. And with this force at your disposal, you propose to rush headlong into you know not what." He spread his hands.

"You're afraid?" Barney said.

Jonas studied his cigarette. "That is unfair of you."

Jane said, "You haven't any right, Barney—"

"I told you to be quiet. I meant it." He was watching Jonas. "You've run off a couple of revolutions, you kidnapped a president, you commanded a brigade in the Spanish affair—"

"Heavens," Jonas said. "Is that in the dossier too?" He shook his head. "Those were matters of an entirely different complexion, Lieutenant. Those were—" He stopped there, thinking that what he said was not entirely true—those old adventures had not been a mere matter of gain, as this one had started out to be. Some had been the result of sheer ebullience, of youthful idealism—rash, ill-considered, quixotic. But one learned, as one grew older, he told himself. Or did one? The catchy little tune was running through his mind. Once upon a time, when the world and he were young.

"You take unfair advantage," he said. "However."

"Jane can run the boat," Barney said. "You just bring the man down here." He paused. "Colonel, is it?"

Jonas sighed. His face was bland, but his old eyes were bright, glowing.

"It has, once or twice, been general." He shook his head. "Sergeant, I think, will do nicely in this present project." He looked at Jane. "If you are ready, helmsman."

"I—" Jane said. She looked at Barney, at Barney's face. She stood up. "I'm ready."

The night was dark, and the sounds of the engines, of the frothing water, hid any stray noises. Jonas put Barlow's gun in the helmsman's ribs, relieved him of his gun, saw Jane wrapped in the helmsman's pea jacket and settled at the wheel. Then he shepherded the man below and into the forward cabin. He gave Barney one of the guns. The man stood there, sullen, defiant.

"I should have finished it off," he said. His eyes were on the towel on Barney's shoulder.

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"You should, indeed," Jonas said. "You might remember that, next time. If there is a next time."

"All right," Barney said. "Now talk. Where are we going? What are we going to do when we get there?"

"We're out fishing," the man said. "Any law against it?"

"Where are we going?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?" He looked at the gun in Barney's hand. He looked again at Barney's face. "You don't scare me, chum."

Jonas said, "Sit down, my man. Right there, on the bunk. So." His hand went into his pocket, came out with the knife. He touched the button in its handle, and the long blade shot out into into position, locked in place with a click. "Now," Jonas said. His eyes, hard on the man's face, were frosty, glittering. He was smiling, which added to the effect.

"Now," he said again, and he moved forward. The man watched the knife, watched Jonas' face. He swallowed. "We have a few questions," Jonas said. He paused. "We expect them to be answered. Do I make myself clear?"

The man sat motionless. He watched the knife. He watched Jonas' face. He glanced once at Barney. He swallowed again, ran his tongue along his lips as if they had become suddenly, unaccountably dry. He looked up at Jonas. "You don't scare me," he said. And his eyes went to the knife again.

"Don't I?" Jonas said. "I think I do. I hope, for your sake, that I do." He moved a little closer. "The lieutenant asked you where we are going. I think you had better tell him."

They left the man in the bunk, tied securely, conscious, against later need. They went out into the main cabin. Barney sat for a moment with his eyes closed. He opened them and looked at Jonas.

Jonas said, "There you are, Lieutenant." He sighed. "I should, of course, have understood it. Federal interest, Potter's curiosity concerning Barlow and Vidali—" He sighed again. Barney was still watching him.

"It is quite plain, Lieutenant. Certain aliens, potential enemies of your country, are in constant need of contacts, points of entry here. And when Mr. Barlow's position in Cuba became untenable and he fled here, it must have been a simple matter for him to re-establish his contact with Vidali and offer the services of his fine house, so conveniently located, and of this fine cruiser—" He paused. "For a fee, of course, an income which would defray his expenses until he could cast about for other, possibly more lucrative, fields of endeavour."

"Four of them," Barney said. He closed his eyes briefly. "Will they speak English?"

"But of course." Jonas smiled. "Of what use would foreign agents be if they could not speak the tongue?"

"Then we can handle them, answer any questions they might ask. They won't know Barlow by sight."

"One wounded man," Jonas said. "One old man. One girl.

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And four trained agents. Lieutenant!" He shook his head, smiling.

"Yes," Barney said. His voice was sharp; his eyes were bright, with his pain, and with something else. "We run alongside the ship. You take them aboard, one at a time. They expect nothing. One at a time, you send them through, into the forward cabin. I'll be there."

"And then?"

"And then we head back; what else?"

"With the enemy secured beneath hatches," Jonas said. He was smiling. "We return in triumph. Do we parade our prisoners as the Romans used to do? Do we receive the plaudits of the multitude, the laughing, cheering populace strewing our path with flowers?" He paused. "Hollyhocks, perhaps?"

"You won't try it," Barney said. "It's no concern of yours. You work for nobody; you care for nobody. You quit." He was sitting up straight now, supporting the wounded arm. His face was tight, hard. "And so they go away because there's no one to meet them. And they land somewhere else. Trained men, as you say, trained in all sorts of things, all sorts of beastliness. You won't even try."

"Did I say that, Lieutenant?"

He shook his head slowly. It was a romantic concept; it held an undeniable appeal. How far afield, he thought, had he allowed himself to stray from his original project? He thought of the girl up on the flying bridge. Her place was with her flowers. And he, Jonas? He thought of the Barlow house, naked, dark, defenceless. "In your way you are a persuasive man, Lieutenant." He pushed himself away from the table. "I will tell young Miss Williams what to expect."

Barney closed his eyes. He opened them again. He smiled briefly, and then the smile was gone. "One thing," he said. Jonas paused, his hand on the door latch. "If he hadn't talked," Barney said, "back there"—he nodded his head towards the forward cabin—"would you have used your knife?"

"Why, Lieutenant," Jonas said. "Do I pry into your trade secrets?" He went out and closed the door behind him. It was cold, unlike Cuba. He wondered if he should ever have left the tropics.

THEY ran on in the darkness, steady on the course the man, Parks, had given them; Jane, no longer questioning, no longer doubting, concentrated on her job.

"He isn't the same," she had said to Jonas. "He's changed and—"

"You wanted him changed, my dear."

"Did I? That was so long ago."

Jonas had smiled to himself in the darkness. "Yesterday, my dear, yesterday afternoon." And he had left her then and returned to the forward cabin, stuffed Barlow and Parks out of sight in the forepeak. "Any noise and I shall return, Mr. Parks. After that there will be no noise." He shut the small door and tidied up the bunks.

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In the main cabin, Barney was still in his chair, his eyes closed. Jonas studied him for a moment and then went into the galley, and returned with a bottle and a glass. "You are still determined, Lieutenant? So be it."

He poured a generous shot of whisky and put it in Barney's hand. "This will help." He took another chair and tasted the whisky himself. "Not nearly as good as rum," he said, "but it suffices." He leaned back.

Barney's eyes were open. He was even smiling a little. "Is that the way it used to sound? I guess it is." He saw the sudden concern on Jonas' face. "You were humming," Barney said, "'Yankee Doodle.'" And he saw Jonas begin to smile, and it passed through his mind that the old man looked young now, suddenly young. And then Jane's heel banged hard overhead, and the matter was forgotten.

"Here we go," Barney said. He put down the glass and took a deep breath and got himself up from the chair. He steadied himself for a moment, forced his eyes into sharp focus, walked steadily to the door. He took the gun out of his pocket. "One at a time," he said.

"One at a time," said Jonas. He let himself out into the cockpit. Forward he saw the dark bulk of the ship, the green light that blinked, once, twice, three times. They slid in alongside the ship. Their engines reversed and then idled, and they lay there, rolling a trifle, in the ship's lee.

A voice called, "What ship is that?"

"Victor," Jonas called. And he heard a command, in a foreign tongue, and the end of a rope ladder banged into the cockpit. "No lights," Jonas called. "There is a Government craft about." He was thinking of the girl, an easy mark there on the flying bridge. He watched the first man swing over the ship's side, come down the ladder, a suitcase strapped on his back. He was beside the man, steadying him, when he stepped into the cockpit. "Welcome," Jonas said. "There is a small matter—"

It took little time, actually. From the ship the commanding voice called, "What is wrong? What is the delay?"

"Now all the way forward," Jonas said. "We want you out of sight. You can understand the necessity." He watched the man go into the cabin, saw him open the far door and go through. He raised his voice. "Nothing!" he said. "Nothing at all! The next one, please!" He watched the second man start down the ladder. He helped him aboard. "Welcome. There is a small matter first—"

It was, Jonas thought, easier, a great deal easier, than he had anticipated.

He spaced the men carefully, giving the Lieutenant ample time. He felt young, quite young, and he hummed beneath his breath as he conducted operations. He saw the fourth man go forward through the main cabin, open the far door and pass through.

"Fare thee well, Captain!" Jonas called. "It has been—"

The gunshot in the forward cabin was plain and clear. There

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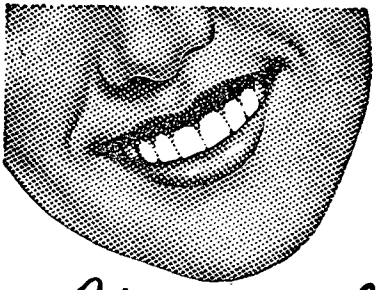

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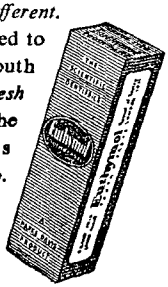

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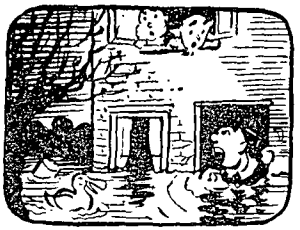

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was a second, muffled, almost immediately. Jonas roared, "Away, Miss Williams, away!"

He felt the engines surge and thrust. Water boiled beneath their stern. And then the ship's floodlights came on, glaring, pitiless, and the commanding voice was raised in a great shout, but the words were lost in the roar of the engines.

"Duck!" Jonas shouted. "Crouch down, Miss Williams!"

He saw her obey, drop to her knees beneath the wheel, and he heard the first shots from the ship, buzzing angrily, heard a burst of shots that tore through the wood, shattered glass in the cabin ports. And from the forward cabin there came another shot.

"Stay down!" Jonas shouted. "Until they stop shooting!" He ran into the main cabin, tugging at the gun in his pocket, pulling out the knife. He threw open the forward door.

Barney was there, braced against the bulkhead. His gun was in his hand. The side of his face was bloody, and the towel wrapped around his shoulder was almost completely red. One man—Jonas did not remember whether it was Number Two or Number Three—lay face down on the deck, his arms and legs sprawled in an odd attitude. Two more men were huddled forward against the bunks. That left one more.

"Behind you!" Barney shouted. "Look out!"

Ridiculous, Jonas thought. At his age, blundering in like a schoolboy. It ran through his mind even while he moved, and he struck backward with the knife, felt it strike, penetrate, and then something exploded against his head and burst in his mind like a brilliant white flame . . .

FROM far off, from a very great distance, he heard a voice. "Peters," it said, "Peters." It came, Jonas thought, from the top of a deep hole, at the bottom of which he opened his eyes. He tried to move.

There was a weight pressing him down, and he struggled against it. And then he saw Barney. Barney had slid down the bulkhead and was sitting there, the blood running down his face, the gun still in his hand, wavering a little, but still there.

"Peters," Barney said. "For God's sake, Peters."

The weight on Jonas had an arm; it was draped over his shoulder. He struggled from beneath it, got himself on one elbow. The gun was still in his left hand, the knife in his right. The blade of the knife was stained red. He turned his head and concentrated, brought into focus the two men still forward against the bunks, no longer huddled now; crouched, tensed. Like vultures, Jonas thought; carrion birds.

"Peters," Barney said.

"I hear you," Jonas said. There was warmth in his chest now, in his mind. He turned himself over, rid himself of the last of the weight and sat up slowly. He was smiling. "The cavalry has arrived, Lieutenant." His voice was weak. It gathered strength as it went along. "I'll take over now."

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He was watching the two men forward. Out of the corner of his eyes he saw Barney's hand, with the gun, drop on to his thigh. Barney's head drooped slowly.

Barney's voice said, " Yes, sir, General. Thank you, sir." The words trailed off in a mumble.

THEY came up the channel at a sedate speed, Jane still at the wheel. Jonas, his hat on the side of his head covering the bruise and the blood in his white hair, stood in the cockpit, leaning against the cabin bulkhead, finding the air not so cold, after all.

Barney came out of the cabin to join him. He looked at Barney, and he contemplated, without regret, the resiliency of youth. " You recover remarkably well, Lieutenant."

Barney smiled. It was a friendly smile, unlike anything Jonas had seen on his face before. " You're a pretty tough article yourself."

Jonas said, " I have been thinking, Lieutenant—" He stopped there. He had indeed been thinking, but he decided that the approach was wrong. " Where do we put in ? " he asked.

" Barlow's house."

" Indeed ? " Jonas' eyes were very bright. So much, he thought ; so much he had not dared really to hope. He thought of the house, naked, dark, practically defenceless. " There is one man still there," he said. " It would, no doubt, be better if I went in first, alone—"

" No need," Barney said. " You've done enough."

" Think nothing of it. A mere trifle. The operation is not yet complete, and—"

" It's all finished," Barney said. " All wrapped up. Potter—"

" Potter ? "

" I've just finished radio-ing him and—"

" Radio," Jonas said. He looked at Barney. " Why did you not think of radio before, Lieutenant ? I find it careless of you."

" It was," Barney said. " I deserve it." He paused. He was smiling. " It wouldn't have been the same, though."

Jonas was silent for a moment. " Perhaps you're right. It would not have been the same." He paused. " But Miss Williams—"

" She'll get over it," Barney said. " It hasn't done her any harm. Maybe even some good."

Jonas thought of Miss Williams' face when she had come below, leaving the wheel unattended, and had looked at Barney, at the blood on his face, the red towel round his shoulder.

" I think, perhaps, you're right," Jonas said.

He looked shoreward, watched them begin their turn to come in to Barlow's landing stage. The house was filled with light ; the floods showed Potter and two or three men standing waiting. Jonas thought of his own project. Hé sighed.

A few moments later he was standing on the landing stage with Potter. Parks and two of the agents came walking, unharmed. Barney and the girl had walked off together, hand in hand. A romantic sight, Jonas had thought. He watched the police carry the other two agents ashore.

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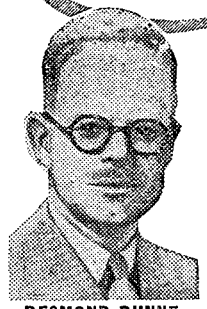

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"It must," said Potter, "have been quite a party."

"I am sorry you missed it," Jonas said. "We would have enjoyed your company."

"You did all right." He paused. "Barlow—" he began, and there he stopped, and watched two policemen come out of the cabin, carrying Barlow between them.

"This one won't do you much good, either," one policeman said.

Potter said, "So I see." There was no need for a second look. He studied Jonas' face. "His neck is broken," he said.

Jonas' face showed surprise, incredulity, shock. "I had no idea," he said.

He raised his right hand and looked at it. He looked at Potter. "Do you suppose," he said, "that I could have struck him too hard? In the heat of the moment, perhaps."

"Perhaps," Potter said. "Perhaps you did, Mr. Peters." He turned his head to hide the small, tight smile. It was the second smile Jonas had seen on Mr. Potter's face.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if that was it," Potter said. "An accident, of course."

"But, of course," said Jonas. "What else?"

He watched the two policemen go into the house—the lighted house, no longer naked, no longer unprotected. He sighed. His hand was in the side pocket of his coat, holding the roll of notes, large notes.

It was just as well, he thought, it was indeed just as well that he had had the foresight to collect passage money in advance from the agents as they came aboard the cruiser. It was not much, a few thousand dollars, but it could be considered, he decided, a day's pay for a day's work.

Potter said, "Another little item for your dossier, Mr. Peters."

"Ah, well," Jonas said. "Memories, as I told you, Mr. Potter, which one stores up against one's old age." He missed Potter's third smile. He would have enjoyed seeing it.

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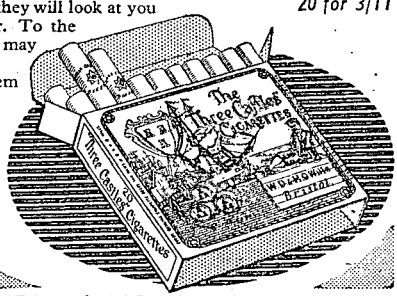

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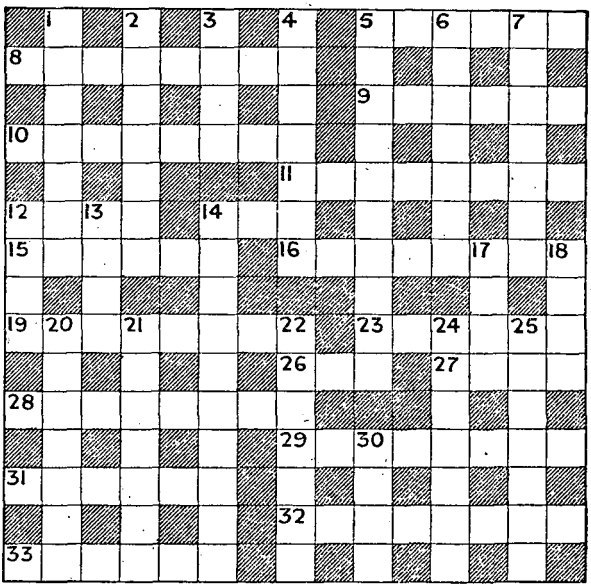
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 106



CLUES

Across

5 Of great significance in our economy (6).

8 But dogs are not the sole inhabitants of this territory ! (8).

9 This local council has a capital start (6).

10 1066 dates it (8).

11 Try a height for him, though he may be going to try another world (8).

12 She dealt in nectar, as the last part of her name might suggest (4).

14 Appropriate currency to offer in a baker's shop ? (3).

15 To ride is the making of him (6).

16 The way across is about a third of the way round (8).

19 East Central London motionless ? Rapturous rather (8).

23 This mollusc must cling very hard to end up as a domestic favourite ! (6).

26 Regret.a street abroad (3).

27 Embraces more than one snake even when a hundred and fifty have gone (4).

28 It could be a painting by Whistler, for example (8).

29 The incumbent is certainly the head of his house (8).

31 Throw out, decapitated or not (6).

32 This will lead you nowhere (3, 2, 3).

33 " The sweetest hours that e'er I spend Are spent among the ——, O " (Robert Burns) (6).

Down

1 Jo, to be laced, must be persuaded (7).

2 This *has* been played with a flamingo ! (7).

3 But the battle was not fought on this part of the hill only (4).

4 " A fiery soul, which working out its way, —— the pigmy body to decay " (Dryden) (7).

5 There's no getting round this epithet for 32 across (10).

6 The first component certainly improves with the second in transit (7).

7 This dish need not contain the fish which appears in it (7).

12 In the region about us (4).

13 These are not just parts on the bench (4).

14 In France, as elsewhere, they may well be said to be *passé* (10).

17 For services rendered or hints (4).

18 The successful do not remain in these for long (4).

20 One might reasonably start this disease in a bad humour (7).

21 Moves uncertainly as some adders (7).

22 It may finally provide a loop-hole for depravity (7).

24 " Here you may see Benedick the —— man " (Shakespeare) (7).

25 Mare and pig make a witty combination (7).

30 This may carry a cowboy or vice versa (4).

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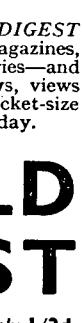

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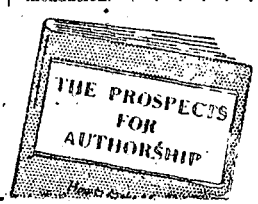

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